

Note on Methodology

121 The methods of ethnography, which constitute the basic method
123 used in gathering the data for this report, had to be followed with considerable discretion, while in Ethiopia. Care had to be taken to avoid misunderstandings and loss of confidence among the inhabitants who view study by outsiders with misgivings.

122 Careful preparation by the author included brief but intensive study of the Amharic language, including writing and grammar; letters of introduction from a scholar who has the confidence of the emperor; lengthy procedures in governmental offices in Addis Ababa to obtain permission and passes to travel to the hinterland where the old culture is little changed by modern contacts.

121 In planning the field project under such circumstances, the author deemed it advisable to formulate his objectives in general rather than specific terms; to assume a flexible and patient attitude; to do what was possible; to establish a base-line of ethnographic information and initial analysis.

122 Procedures in the field included travel by mule to various rural hamlets. This was necessary due to regional differences in culture traits, notably in the ethnic division of labor. Travel is possible only in the dry season, October to mid-June. A guide-interpreter was
123 secured in the town of Gondar, where English is taught in the new
124 elementary school. His services became increasingly valuable in interviewing, checking observations and information for reliability and validity; and, by no means least, in establishing rapport with people in the region, most of whom knew his father well. For the guide's father was the local "woggasha" (native surgeon-herbologist-empiricist).

522 Finally, the author checked his own results against the work of

Introduction: Thematic Synopsis

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On the fertile highland plateau of the "horn of Africa" and straddling the Great Rift Valley, ancient Abyssinia culturally bridges the Middle East and Africa. Here, the peasant society of the Amhara, despite a very primitive technology, enjoys a complex spiritual culture. Amhara culture is the subject of this report.

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Most of the material to be presented was gathered by the author during field work in Ethiopia in 1953-54, after brief, though intensive study of the Amharic language. The district of Gondar, north and northeast of Lake Tana, was chosen for intensive study because it was never conquered by the culturally more African Galla tribes, when they overran and populated most of old Abyssinia in the sixteenth-nineteenth centuries A. D. The fierce pride of the "Gondarey" has caused him to preserve the old culture more than have inhabitants of other districts.

In organizing and analyzing the data, the author's purpose has been:

1. To regard the web of activities with reference to ecology, division of labor, and standards of living.
2. To pay great attention to historical depth and local involvement with other ethnic groups. Historical considerations cannot be ignored in a study of Abyssinian culture; and consideration of ethnic relationships is, if for no other reason, necessitated by the ethnic division of labor in the

721 Amhara area, and also by the fact of considerable regional cultural variation among the Amhara people.

3. To describe culture traits and social institutions as they function, and also to show how the Amhara people themselves feel about them; how they see themselves in relation to neighboring groups and in relation to the human and non-human environment in general.

The author will also offer some tentative conclusions about ethos, cultural foci, and the dynamics of Amhara culture.

ETHIOPIAN HIGHLANDS

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speaking peoples, who have contributed such an important element to the populations of the Mediterranean basin.¹ 174

I believe that the early civilized world of the valleys: Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Indus, which has been revealed by the researches and explorations of the last century had its background in the great ranges from which its peoples came. Professor Toynbee has pointed out that the regions of the Nile and the Mesopotamian valleys must have been areas of unhealthy swamp and wilderness when men first settled there.² Such terrain would not produce the conditions necessary to stimulate the multiplication of an indigenous stock: A terrain of this type would rather need clearing and developing by immigrants forced to find their living there after having been driven down from mountain areas by the pressure of increased numbers on food, which we have seen is a common characteristic of mountain economy. But just as the Highland migrant working in the field of American industrialism soon acquires new techniques and develops a higher standard of material culture than his brother who remains a crofter in Scotland, so the colonists of the Nile and Mesopotamian valleys far outpaced in material culture the inhabitants of the remote highlands of Ethiopia or of the Zagros and the Taurus. 121

There is one last point: the eighteenth-century prejudice against mountains, which influence still remains, tended to an exaggeration of the difficulties of mountain travel in primitive times. Yet the higher ridges of mountain chains often are the easiest lines of movement for men on foot. It makes possible the avoidance of forested valleys and ravines blocked by undergrowth and full of fevers. In England even our earliest forebears kept to the Downlands and trudged along the ridges to keep clear of the thick undergrowth and swamps of the low ground. And the so-called Alpine peoples kept to the mountain belt as they penetrated westward into Europe from the Highlands of Asia Minor through the Balkans to the Alps and the Pyrenees.

In this connection it is possible to appreciate the essential importance of Aksum as an early cultural centre. Aksum is at the northern head of the route along the great Eastern Escarpment which leads into the heart of the Ethiopian Highland; at the same time Aksum is within easy reach of the Red Sea and the affluents which lead down to the Nile valley. There is a theory that the monoliths at Aksum are in fact the remains of a great Megalithic centre; the historic Aksumites merely made their own sculptural additions to the stone monuments which they already found in situ.³ If we accept this theory we can see Aksum as a great centre of early megalithic culture having its connections with the reputed megalithic remains noted by recent Italian 174
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travellers in the region of the southern lakes.

¹ Abbé Morit, 'Histoire de l'Ethiopie,' vol. 1. Ethiopia was a term applied by ancient writers loosely and varying to all the northern half of Africa between the Atlantic and the Red Sea, and the term was even extended to Caucasian Colchis and to India. In fact mythical Ethiopia covered all that width of Africa and Asia where the Neolithic cultures first appeared. In classical times the name Ethiopia was applied to Nubia and the Sudan and it was only in post-Christian times that it was limited to the Highland area of modern Ethiopia.

² A. Toynbee, 'The study of history,' vols. 1/2.

³ Sir E. H. W. Budge, chapter on Aksum in vol. II 'History of Ethiopia.'

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[For a theoretical discussion on individualism as a psychological disposition, as a mode of social organization, and as a cultural value among the Amhara, see category 116, pp. 238-286.]

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- 12| eval. Such sights and sounds! A minstrel singing his subtle lyrics as he bows a one-stringed fiddle; in the dark interiors of church, barefoot deacons holding beeswax candles and swinging vessels of smoking incense; the pomp of a nobleman moving cross country with his crowded entourage; a young girl washing the feet of her father's guest; warriors boasting with their martial chants; the stately rhythms of clergy chanting and dancing under the mid-day sun; the open marketplace, offering all manner of livestock, grain, and spices; the counsel of an elder, resolving a dispute; the simple dignity of the bow when two men meet.

The scholar's job is of course to transcend such a medley of impressions and to discern the patterns of order through which such details are bound together in a living whole. In carrying out this task I have not imposed any one methodological framework on my materials. Rather, as the reader of Robert Redfield's methodological handbook, *The Little Community*, will readily appreciate, I have sought to organize these materials in terms of half a dozen of the more common viewpoints used in the study of human communities. Roughly speaking, I have looked upon Amhara culture as a history (chapter ii), an outlook on life (chapter iii), a way of growing up (chapter iv), a social structure (chapter v), a kind of psychological orientation (chapter vi), and as "a combination of opposites" (chapter vii). The observational techniques employed in the course of this study have been accordingly diverse, ranging from the analysis of literary texts and oral traditions to the use of questionnaires, projective tests, interviews, and participant observation.

- 12| Yet however gratifying the contemplation of a traditional culture may be, the student of traditional societies today finds it difficult to remain aloof from the historical changes which now permeate the world. As he talks with the bright young men of the cities, he finds considerable ambivalence regarding the value of traditional ways. He finds Ethiopians acutely conscious that their traditional life, for all its charm, has been chronically afflicted with war, pestilence, famine, and disease, and that their traditional social order has encouraged the many to toil and the few to live in idle luxury. He sees them bitter that Ethiopia has remained backward—"wada hwāla qaratchi!"—and isolated from the great advances of the human spirit achieved elsewhere. They are anxious to enter the modern world.

And thus the aesthetic impulse is joined by the moral. The sociologist feels drawn to contribute what he can to elucidate the sometimes desperate problems faced by societies trying to make a rapid transition to modernity. In this he is inspired in part by the history of his discipline. The contrast between traditional and modern society has constituted the central substantive problem in sociology since Auguste Comte named the discipline well over a century ago, and some of the foremost proponents of sociology—notably, Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Mannheim—have understood their calling to in-

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volve the sympathetic analysis of problems created by the great transition to |2|
modernity.

In the case of Ethiopia the temptation is particularly compelling. The literature on Ethiopia is conspicuous for the absence of thoughtful social analysis. With few exceptions it is divided between the esoteric treatises of specialists and the insipid blandishments of partisans.* I have therefore offered certain analyses and suggestions regarding Ethiopia's dilemmas, not on the presumption that they are in every case the most sound, but with the aim of raising questions and formulating issues in public which heretofore have been politely overlooked or furtively concealed, or of promoting their discussion in a more exploratory manner than has previously been the practice. (114)

In so doing I trust that my words will not be taken as the preachings of an omniscient Westerner to a backward congregation. On the contrary, I am fully aware that the problems faced by Ethiopia today are simply variants of the basic problems faced by all of us throughout the world, problems which stem from the accelerated rate of historic change in our time and the persisting difficulties of institutionalizing a rational civilization in any human society. If I have sought to throw light on the dilemmas facing Ethiopians, it has been in part with the end of providing a mirror against which the dilemmas of Western societies might also be viewed.

For this and other reasons, our discussion touches now and then on matters of more universal concern. I have done this by means of allusion either to the comparable experience of other societies or to more abstract ways of conceptualizing the phenomena under consideration. Such references to comparative sociology or social theory represent the intrusion, beyond aesthetic interest and practical concern, of a purely intellectual impulse. I have, in other words, permitted myself to linger awhile with certain questions which emerged in the course of my work on Ethiopia—such as the nature of ambiguity, the functions of oral literature, or the concept of individualism—for their intrinsic theoretic interest.

In a way, this type of digression, more than any specific proposals set forth herein, embodies the chief message I would wish to convey to those now shaping the fate of developing nations. The upheavals of our time do not only confront us with dilemmas of action and moral emergencies; they and the work of scholars who study them also afford great opportunity for the cultivation of those faculties of "sociological imagination" and "sociological sensibility" which can enrich our lives as we live them, here and now, from day to day. To readers who may be offended by parts of this book which may seem critical, I can only say that to be modern means—for all of us—to be joined to

* The chief exception is Margery Perham's book, *The Government of Ethiopia*, which remains far and away the best general introduction to contemporary Ethiopian society.

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- 121 a world-wide dialogue about the limitations and potentialities of human experience. For by any reckoning, a key defining characteristic of modernity is the prominence of education; and education in its truest sense, as Robert Redfield has put it, is "conversation about the meaning of life, as each sees some part of it, on behalf of everyone."

000 It is in the spirit of Robert Redfield that this book was conceived. I should like to place this remembrance of him at the head of the list of acknowledgments which follows. The debt owed by those who had the fortune to study the art of questioning with him is not to be measured.

There are numerous other debts I wish to acknowledge as the author of this book, with the regret that they cannot all be identified individually. I am deeply grateful to:

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the Foreign Area Training Fellowship program, for a grant which financed my field work in Ethiopia;

the Committee for the Comparative Study of New Nations, University of Chicago, for providing me the time to complete this inquiry as well as a stimulating seminar on kindred problems;

Lloyd Fallers and Morris Janowitz of the University of Chicago for invaluable practical assistance and moral support at times when work on the manuscript was jeopardized;

a number of friends and colleagues, in the United States and abroad, who read parts of the manuscript and contributed helpful suggestions;

librarians in many institutions, including the Library of Congress, Northwestern University, the University of Chicago, the Istituto Pontificio Biblico at Rome, and the libraries of Addis Ababa;

my wife Joanna, for the generous use of her amazing talents both as a perceptive observer and as a literary critic;

and Ethiopians in many walks of life, whose sensitive hospitality and rewarding confidence it was our privilege to enjoy.

D. N. L.

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197 related to Ge'ez, the ancient and liturgical language of Ethiopia, much as
T Italian is related to Latin.¹ It was in Tigre country that, during the first seven
175 centuries A.D., the kingdom of Aksum reached heights of civilization never
again attained in Ethiopia's history. Because of the antiquity of their region
and the glory of their past, the Tigre are to some extent the cultural aristocrats of Ethiopia.

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131 The Amhara inhabit vast areas of what are today the provinces of Bagem-
A der, Gojjam, Wallo, and Shoa. Their language, Amharic, is the official lan-
197 guage of Ethiopia.* Since the beginning of what is called the restored Solo-
A monid Dynasty (1270), all but one of the emperors of Ethiopia have been
175 Amhara.† The exception was a Tigre, Emperor Yohānnes IV (1872-89),
643 though he sojourned for many years at Dabra Tābor in Amhara country, and
Amharic was commonly spoken at his court.

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171 The differences between Amhara and Tigre culture have not yet been
197 studied systematically. Even so, one can say that their differences are not
nearly so great as what the two groups have in common. Language forms the
chief difference. Like Ge'ez and Tigrinya, Amharic is a Semitic language,
ultimately descended from old South Arabic, but Amharic has been molded
to a greater degree by indigenous Cushitic tongues. Other differences relate
to minor variations in custom, greater communal orientation in some Tigre
areas, and differences in temperament. But the two groups share the legacy
of Aksum, the Ethiopic alphabet, Ge'ez literature, Monophysite Christianity,
similar political and social institutions, and the same style of life. One would
be justified in treating their traditional Abyssinian culture as a unity, as vir-
tually all authors have done in the past.

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121 In this book, however, I have chosen to focus on Amhara culture as the
563 dominant tradition in Ethiopia. This has been done, first of all, because of my
A limited competence to deal with Tigre materials, since I am neither familiar
121 with Tigrinya nor fortunate enough to have done field work in Tigre areas.
E But a less fortuitous reason is that any serious account of contemporary
162 Ethiopia must begin with the fact of Amhara dominance. With respect to
161 numbers, true, the Amhara are in a minority: Amhara probably comprise no
more than one-quarter of Ethiopia's total population (now estimated at
around twenty-two million). Their dominance is to be measured, rather, in
political and cultural terms. On the political side it is manifest in the perpetu-
ation of the Amhara monarchy and the preponderance of Amhara in top
political offices. On the cultural side it appears in the spread of Amhara cus-
toms throughout the empire by officials, soldiers, settlers, and teachers, and in

* English is the second official language.

† A number of Amhara emperors since the mid-eighteenth century were partly of Galla stock, however.

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the continuous Amharization of the peoples of the empire through the required use of Amharic in schools and government offices and through the substitution of Amharic names for indigenous place-names in many parts of the country. If the national institutions and culture of Ethiopia are essentially Abyssinian, more particularly they are Amhara.²

The domination of Ethiopian national life by the Amhara, and the related fact that the modern Ethiopian nation was the creation of the Amhara and not of European colonists, are characteristics which distinguish Ethiopia from all other African societies. For Ethiopia is the only country in Africa with a large number of ethnic groups where one of these groups has imposed its rule and its language over the rest and has preserved indigenous national institutions, elites, and culture patterns from displacement by Western forms and authorities.

This condition has imparted a basically conservative tone to the character of public life in Ethiopia, especially when compared to the new nations of sub-Saharan Africa. Because Ethiopians did not have to participate in the postwar struggle for independence, they did not experience the rise of agitational politics or the related phenomenon of political parties or movements. As a corollary of this, the Ethiopian populace was not exposed to oratory promising dynamic social and economic changes, and therefore developed no mass base of support for populist leaders who might seek to promote more rapid forms of change.

Yet if modernization has proceeded more slowly in Ethiopia than elsewhere in Africa—and speed in such matters has at times been associated with recklessness—the pattern of virtually unbroken Amhara rule for at least seven centuries stands in refreshing contrast to the somewhat anguished struggle for nationality within the new nations. Elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa no indigenous cultural tradition exists at the national level. There are many degrees to this cultural fragmentation. At one extreme are countries such as the Ivory Coast which, with some sixty disparate tribal groups in a population of about three million, can as yet appeal only to French culture as a basis for unity at the national level. Somewhat less fragmented are the nations, like Nigeria, in which a small number of important tribal traditions dominate the national scene. Still more consolidated is Uganda, whose kingdom of Buganda has long supported a strong quasi-national tradition, but whose non-Baganda tribes have remained largely outside the pale.

In Ethiopia, by contrast, Amhara rule has long provided a minimal basis for national unity. While this rule has been secured by coercive means, it has accustomed the various tribes in Ethiopia to live under a common sovereignty and to some extent has enabled their leaders to communicate with one another by means of a common native tongue.

One need not be blind to the drawbacks of Amhara dominance to recog-

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nize in it these and other important advantages for Ethiopia. These drawbacks have been those of any imperialism. During the great Amhara expansion under Menelik (1889-1913), many peoples were maltreated. Independent tribesmen were reduced to slavery; unique cultures were decimated; proud kings were dragged in the dust. Those who held down the Amhara position in these occupied territories seized land from the indigenous peoples and exploited them much as would any invader. The unfavorable reputation of the Amhara in the non-Amhara provinces has been due largely to the example of these governors and soldiers whose worst impulses were at times allowed free play.

One can scarcely single out the Amhara for criticism because of their imperialistic behavior in the past. Nor is it fair to judge the Amhara people as a whole by the character of their provincial officials in conquered areas, any more than one may judge the British, French, Portuguese, or Russian people by the behavior of certain imperious and sadistic colonial administrators. This distinction was self-evident to more discriminating observers of the Ethiopian scene like Augustus Wylde, who wrote in 1901:

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There is no harder worker than the Abyssinian peasant, and no more harmless and hospitable person when left alone and properly treated; and no more truculent, worthless, conceited, lazy and useless individual than the Abyssinian soldier, who formerly did nothing but prey upon the defenceless cultivator.³

Indeed, if any imperialism of modern times should be granted special consideration, it might be that of the Amhara. The Amhara were to some extent merely reconquering lands that had been taken from them in earlier centuries. Furthermore, they needed additional strength to help withstand threats to their own independence. Finally, it can also be argued that if the Amhara had not conquered the other peoples now within the Ethiopian boundaries some European power might have colonized them instead.

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However one may assess the fact of Amhara dominance in Ethiopia, it is a given of the present situation. It is a fact that leads naturally to two outstanding questions. One concerns the relations between the Amhara and the non-Amhara peoples of the empire: is it possible for the latter to be integrated more effectively and justly into the texture of a common national life? If not, the present state of tribal calm may prove to be but a long prelude to a wasteful storm. The question demands serious and sustained inquiry by a number of scholars, Ethiopians and foreigners alike.

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The other question concerns the nature of Amhara culture, as the dominant tradition in Ethiopia, and its implications for the processes of Ethiopia's modernization now at work and yet to come. To this question we now direct our attention.

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TRADITION AND MODERNITY

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121 Insofar as Ethiopia is committed to the pursuit of modernity, she cannot fail
195 to be embarrassed to some extent by the wax-and-gold complex. For nothing
538 could be more at odds with the ethos of modernization, if not with its actual-
ity, than a cult of ambiguity.⁹

It is true, of course, that cultural formations analogous to wax and gold in their exploitation of ambiguity have been prominent throughout the history of the West, not to mention the whole non-Western world. The Christian tradition has always made much of parables and allegories. The classical teaching of rhetoric, following Cicero, placed great stress on the use of paradox; and a major philosophical tradition, stretching from Plato to Marx, has been founded on a logic which assumes that reality can be known only by combining opposite concepts and that any single term is subject to dual interpretation. The flowering of symbolist literature, to take a more recent example, created an audience as partial to subtle allusion and *double-entendre* as the most obscurantist proponent of *westa wayrä*.

Yet there can be little doubt that the pace-setting spirit of modern Western culture rests on a commitment to unambiguous communication. It is predicated on the proposition that A must be A or not be A. It was no accident that one of the more characteristic philosophical movements of the present century, logical positivism, should have had as its primary motif the desire to maximize precision in the use of language. For the decisive institutions of the modern world—technologies based on logico-experimental science, rational legal systems, and bureaucratic organizations in government, commerce, and industry—depend intimately on the unambiguous definition of terms and the utmost clarity of expression. Whether the task be one of constructing a legal contract, outlining a job description, designing a nuclear reactor, classifying genera and species, or defining variables and their interrelations, these characteristic modern activities are informed by the need and intention to eliminate, as far as possible, all traces of linguistic ambiguity.

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121 The incorporation of these aspects of modern culture into Ethiopian life
195 must inevitably produce a certain amount of strain in a culture which makes
177 such thoroughgoing use of analogy and equivocation. Indeed, tension gener-
578 ated by this issue has been manifest in a variety of ways. Among the
modern-educated Ethiopians, one finds demands for greater clarity in the
specification of responsibilities in administration. One finds increased im-
patience with the devious, equivocal talk involved in joint action of any sort.
One finds a slowly growing disposition to structure and fulfil expectations in
literal terms, and occasional outbursts of protest against the vagueness and
the conspiratorial mentality of those schooled only in the traditional way. In
order to escape what they feel are the burdensome subtleties of Amharic,

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some Ethiopians prefer to speak in English in their offices. An alternative solution is proffered by those Amharic writers and journalists who have attempted to adapt Amharic to the modern idiom, replacing the florid, intricate sentence of yore with short, simple, straightforward declarative sentences—an effort that parallels changes in other countries, such as Japan, where an intrinsically more ambiguous language than Amharic in the traditional culture has been revised to facilitate more precise modes of expression.¹⁰

The opposition between the wax-and-gold complex and the rationalistic aspects of modern culture which some Ethiopians now seek to assimilate is of interest here as an instance of the more general phenomenon toward which this book as a whole is oriented. It is the dilemma posed in all the nations of Asia and Africa by the confrontation of their traditional cultures with their rather recently activated modernist aspirations. To study what is transpiring in these nations in terms of the encounter between tradition and modernity, rather than in terms of the more bland and less biased category of social change, is to focus our attention on a very important aspect of their actual situation: many members of these societies have suddenly been forced to grapple with a number of intellectual and moral dilemmas of great magnitude. The concepts of tradition and modernity are symbols to which they are more or less passionately attached. All of them have concepts symbolizing the sanctity of tradition, like the Amharic *hāymānot abāw* ("faith of the fathers"); and all have concepts symbolizing the goal of modernity, like the Amharic *seṭṣānē* ("civilization"). And in all these nations the conflict between the two sorts of orientation has produced acute forms of disorientation, on the one hand, and extraordinary challenges to creativity, on the other.

Adopting this perspective for the study of "transitional" societies probably opens the door more widely than usual for the intrusion of the biases of the observer. For the observer's own attitudes regarding tradition and modernity naturally affect the order of questions he will ask and the kinds of data he will examine in making his analysis of the "actual situation." They influence, for example, how much attention he pays to the weakening of norms governing traditional kinship systems and whether he views this primarily as a form of social disorganization or primarily as a precondition for more effective societal organization. Accordingly it is fitting that we introduce the analyses to be presented below with a brief statement of the philosophy which guides the author's approach to these questions. This may be done most effectively by surveying the range of positions that might be taken. In considering the encounter between traditional and modern culture patterns currently experienced in acute form in most nations of the world, one may discern, at a high level of abstraction, these five positions: (1) the Traditionalist, (2) the Modernist, (3) the Skeptic, (4) the Conciliatory, and (5) the Pragmatist.

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- 121 The Traditionalist may be defined as one who is oriented to the maximization of traditional values. What these values are of course varies considerably from culture to culture, but in all cases they include the values of kinship and religion. The Traditionalist sees modernization in general as a radically demoralizing force, yet may favor those elements of modern culture which serve to strengthen traditional patterns: modern military techniques to defend the nation's integrity, modern media to propagate inherited beliefs and values, etc. The questions inspired by this approach would be: What are the traditional values? In what ways are they threatened by modernization, and how may they be saved?

The Modernist is, in one form or another, a child of the Enlightenment. He asserts the superiority of reason over mere custom and locates the most important human values in the effort to subject man's physical and social environment to rational control. The Modernist views traditional patterns instrumentally, as potential aids or obstacles to modernization. The main questions he asks are: What are the modernizing elements in the society? What potentially useful resources are latent in the traditional system? What are the traditional obstacles to modernization, and how can they be overcome?

The Skeptic feels that no really worthwhile values can be realized in transitional societies, since their traditional orders have been fatally undermined and yet they are incapable of sustaining a modern institutional order. The reality alluded to here has been depicted in Colin Turnbull's poignant book, *The Lonely African*. Turnbull sees the urban, modern-educated Africans as adrift, accepted neither by the Western masters of modern culture nor by their own people, and the rural traditional people as no less vulnerable because they have lost the power and isolation necessary to sustain the ancient ways. This condition is regarded by some observers as justification for a position of skeptical detachment. Their commitment is to orders of integral value impossible in a society so disrupted, and their intellectual interest in transitional societies is, to paraphrase Max Weber, to see how much they can bear.

The position I have labeled "Conciliatory" stresses the minimization of tension and violence rather than the maximization of values, traditional or modern. The Conciliatory sees the transitional situation as one inherently fraught with increased conflict, and he is concerned more with the maintenance of security and order than with the quality of life in the social order involved. Insofar as he sees modernization as desirable, his main concern is that it be gradual. Questions natural to this approach include: What are the main lines of cleavage in a transitional society? What are the tendencies toward radical polarization between traditionalist and modernist elements in the society, and what conditions promote the reduction of such polarization?

The Pragmatist position differs from the Skeptic and the Conciliatory chiefly in its more affirmative emphasis. The Pragmatist is committed to the

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optimum realization of *all* values possible in a given historic situation. He affirms the human values of modernization, yet conceives of modernity not as of a single, fixed nature but as relative to the cultural context in which modernization takes place. Given the commitment to modernization he would sustain traditional values wherever possible; would modify them where feasible; and would reject them where necessary. The chief questions raised from this point of view will be outlined presently, since it is the approach we ourselves shall be following. 121

All of the intellectual positions just identified have been taken by respectable thinkers. All are to be found among the members of the transitional societies, distributed according to the individual's position in the social structure and, secondarily, according to his psychological makeup. Within the social sciences, moreover, the subject matters of the various disciplines incline them to one or another of these positions. Roughly speaking, one may say that heretofore the anthropologist has tended to take the Traditionalist position; the economist and the Marxist sociologist have been Modernists; the political scientist has leaned toward the Conciliatory position; while sociologists have been oriented as Skeptics and Pragmatists.

THE QUESTIONS OF A PRAGMATIST

Our intention in this book is to analyze a number of aspects of the confrontation between Amhara tradition and Ethiopia's quest for modernity from the viewpoint of a Pragmatist. Three general questions express the main concerns of this viewpoint: (1) What is the nature of the traditional culture, and what are its more enduring beliefs and values? (2) What aspects of modern culture are of interest to the society, and what are the processes by which they are introduced and institutionalized? (3) Given this interest in modernization, in what ways has it been frustrated by certain features of the traditional culture?

These three questions divide the following chapters into three pairs. Chapters ii and iii attempt a sympathetic understanding of some aspects of Amhara culture and an assessment of their positive relevance for Ethiopia in transition. Chapters iv and v deal with aspects of Amhara culture which have been found inadequate for modernization and with the natural processes by which they have been replaced in part by modernizing structures. Chapters vi and vii then explore aspects of the traditional Amhara culture which appear to be obstacles to the realization of the modernist goals. 128

We shall begin by exploring one of the traditional bases of cultural identity among the Amhara, one of those primordial sentiments whose integrity is a condition of vitality for a traditional people.¹¹ Vis-à-vis outsiders, the Amhara identify strongly with their religion, language, and racial characteristics, though not so fanatically as to preclude their toleration of other groups as [186]

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- 121 part of a common nationality. Among themselves, however, the Amhara
- 128 place great stress on region of origin. Deeply sentimental about their home-
- [186] lands, they regard those whose families have long dwelt in the same area almost as kinsmen vis-à-vis Amhara from other regions. In chapter ii, two of these areas which hold a special place in Ethiopian history are explored in some detail. The history, ethos, and cultural significance of Manz and Gondar are discussed, partly to provide an introduction to Amhara culture that has some historical depth, and partly as background to the general question of the place of primordial sentiments like regionalism in a modernizing society.

Chapter iii proceeds to examine the matrix of Amhara culture, the world of the peasant. Its rhetorical aim is chiefly to bring the little-known peasant into sharper focus, to reaffirm the peasant world as one worthy of attention and respect. This will be done, first, by describing the social setting of peasant life, and the main events which make up the daily round and annual cycle of the typical Amhara. Then we shall explore the world view of the Amhara peasant, the main ideas and attitudes through which he interprets his experience. In conclusion, we shall discuss the relation of some aspects of this world view to certain aspects of modern culture.

Chapter iv proceeds from the fact that the skills and values needed for effective participation in a modernizing society cannot be imparted by the traditional processes of socialization during adolescence. With the establishment of a government school system a new and separate pattern has come into being that exists largely, though not wholly, in isolation from the traditional agents and mechanisms of secondary socialization. The subject of this chapter is thus the contrasting conditions in which an Amhara youth is brought up in the traditional and modernizing sectors of Ethiopian society. This account is followed by a portrayal of the outlook of Ethiopian students today, with emphasis on the question of the continuity and discontinuity of their beliefs, tastes, and values with those of traditional Amhara culture.

In chapter v our attention shifts to the elite structure of Amhara-Tigre society. In this sphere modernization has proceeded, not by the addition of a novel structure as in the case of secondary socialization during adolescence, but through a process of differentiation within the existing order and deliberate co-ordination by the sovereign. We shall discuss, first, the traditional elites of monarchy, nobility, and clergy; and then the changes in the status of these elites and the emergence of the new elites of government officials and a modern-educated "intelligentsia."

A key question to emerge from this chapter concerns what appears to be the relative ineffectuality and passivity of the modernizing intelligentsia as a whole. This is a complex and difficult question, only partly to be explained by the political conditions which are referred to in the chapter. We shall sug-

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gest that it also reflects certain psychological and social characteristics deeply rooted in the culture of the land of wax and gold. These characteristics will be the subject of analysis in the two concluding chapters, which deal, respectively, with the phenomena of orality and of individualism in Amhara culture. 121 • 128

It should be evident from the foregoing that I have refrained from attempting a comprehensive assessment of the relationship between Amhara tradition and Ethiopia's modernization. By limiting myself to problems for which I had both prior theoretical interests and data obtained at first hand, I have sought to gain in accuracy of detail and depth of understanding what I might lose in breadth of coverage. It is hoped, moreover, that these studies may stimulate other scholars to extend this mode of analysis into such crucial areas as law, economic behavior, family life, religion, and military institutions.

On the other hand, by treating the relation between tradition and modernity as it appears in a variety of social and cultural phenomena rather than by concentrating on a single problem, I have found it easier to articulate some of the complexities of that relation. For traditional patterns and modern aspirations are related in many ways. Oftentimes they are fully compatible, the traditional either positively supporting the modern or else presenting no conflict with it. When conflict does obtain, on the other hand, it may work toward resolution in a number of different ways. One alternative is straightforward displacement of the old by the new, through a varying combination of coercive and persuasive measures. Another alternative is through structural differentiation, as mentioned above, either through the incorporation of a novel form from outside or through processes of internal differentiation. Still another way is through a subtle transformation of traditional forms so that they continue to be meaningful but are redefined to fit the modern situation. In its most creative outcome, the conflict may involve so genuine a dialogue between traditional and modern patterns that novel values emerge and authentic variants of modern culture are developed. 121

Perhaps the most important insight in this connection is that while traditional patterns may stand in conflict with modernity in some respects, the same patterns may support modernity in other respects. It is to this sort of complex relationship that the Pragmatist is most likely to draw attention. Theoretically the relationship follows logically from the realization, hard won by sociologists during recent decades, that no modern society can exist without substantial reliance on patterns which must be regarded as traditional and not rational. For a concrete example of this dual relationship, let us turn once more to the phenomenon previously discussed, that of wax and gold.

We have argued that the ambiguity and equivocation symbolized by the Amharic formula wax and gold stands in opposition to the semantic dimension. 121 195 538

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- 121 sion of modernization which, because of the ascendancy of technology, con-
195 tractual relations, and bureaucratic organization places great stress on the
538 unambiguous use of language. Yet we may now argue that the intellectual
habits associated with the wax-and-gold pattern are also valuable assets in
Ethiopia's pursuit of modernity.

The experience of history has demonstrated the futility of attempting the revolutionary implementation of a clear and distinct ideal in human society. No matter how bold and sweeping the program, traditional patterns persist tenaciously. The only real alternatives are whether they are to be maintained in isolation from the modern culture, or whether traditional and modern patterns can be fused sufficiently to produce a relatively homogeneous sort of culture. As Gabriel Almond's analysis suggests, the latter alternative appears to be conducive to stability and effectiveness in modern political systems.¹² For that to take place, however, traditional symbols must be interpreted with sufficient ambiguity as to permit their fusion with modern ones. The problems of "cultural management" faced by the elites of the transitional nations can only be handled in the long run by a deliberate effort to exploit the ambiguity of traditional symbols.

Enrico Cerulli's interpretation of the Aksumite inscriptions provides an interesting precedent for such manipulation of language in the service of induced culture change in Ethiopia.¹³ Cerulli has remarked on the cautious and ambiguous language with which Emperor Ēzānā recorded his conversion to Christianity in the fourth century. For example, Ēzānā refers to his new deity, not as "God of the Christians," but with the traditional pagan symbolism, "God of the Heaven" and "God of the Earth"; and he attaches to his new God the same epithet—"Who has not been conquered by enemies"—which traditionally belonged to the pagan god Mahrem. So interpreted, Ēzānā's inscription may be seen as an antique expression of that cultural disposition which centuries later the Amhara were to crystallize in the canons of *sam-ennā warq* poesy. At the same time it illustrates how the sacred symbols of a traditional culture may be used to facilitate radical innovation.

What is true at the level of national leadership is no less true for the leadership of less inclusive social systems. Wise politicians at all levels have always been aware that to gain support and preserve solidarity it is not advisable to adhere scrupulously to a single literal interpretation of any system of beliefs or code of norms. This perception has been affirmed by recent sociological investigations, which show that the most effective administrators of complex organizations are those who have a high tolerance of ambiguity and who are skilled in the use of ambiguous language for the purpose of reducing interpersonal tensions.

In addition to serving these instrumental functions, the ambiguous use of language belongs in the most modern of cultures because it is the foundation

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of a humane literary style. The rationalist emphasis on clear and distinct ideas (21) and the puritanical emphasis on honest, straightforward, and plain talk are (195) indispensable in running the machinery of modern society but by themselves (538) are insufficient to represent the savor of human experience. The ascendancy of unambiguous communication in American culture has resulted in the triumph of "a journalese," which is characterized, as one critic has put it, by "words of flat signification . . . and with none of the broadly ruminative phrases which have the power to inspire speculation." As he further observes:

The essential sterility of such a style is one of the surest signs we have that modern man is being dessicated. For the "modern" style is at once brash and timid: brash enough to break old patterns without thinking, and timid before the tremendous evocative and constructive powers immanent in language.¹⁴

If the aim of modern culture is a fuller life for man, it neglects its ends if strictly cognitive and instrumental considerations become so dominant that its very matrix becomes flat and dry. For modernity to be complete, the tremendous evocative powers immanent in language must also be unleashed.

The distrust of ambiguity arises in a modernizing society because those processes most obviously associated with the culture of modernity—chiefly those having to do with rational mastery over the environment and the rational co-ordination of human activities—take place in contexts where unambiguous communication is imperative. The successful development and operation of institutions in these areas do require, as we have suggested, the setting-aside of devious and equivocal habits of mind. But in those areas involving the creation of solidarity, the management of tensions, and the expression of intuition and sentiment, criteria of effectiveness would seem to permit, indeed to require considerable reliance on the uses of ambiguity. From this it follows that the wax-and-gold mentality should be regarded not only as an obstacle to Ethiopia's modernization but also, by virtue of its contribution to the continuing effectiveness of her social organization and the continuing richness of her expressive culture, as a beneficial agent.

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in such numbers that "Manzē" virtually became a synonym for "underground patriot." 829
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After the liberation, as after the routing of Ahmad Grāñ's forces, the Manzē once again returned to redeem a ravished land. Slowly, the houses were rebuilt, the land was plowed once more. Churches which had been rebuilt after Grāñ's destruction only to be razed by the Italians were again put into place. Tough in his spiritual as in his physical life, the Manzē doggedly re-established the culture of his own. Now as before the occupation, a man of Manz sits on the throne, promising to let no foreigner take his country's land,* while the young braves celebrate the royal line in their festive boasting: [539]

Ya-Manz ababā, ya-Manz ababāl Yābbabāl genāl

The flower of Manz, the flower of Manz! It will bloom yet again!

The Legacy of Manz and Gondar

Thus far the significance of Manz and Gondar has been discussed from 121 the point of view of an outsider. We have attempted to assess, on the basis of the best available evidence, the respective historical and cultural roles of these two noted Amhara regions. We turn now to a different though related question, namely, the significance of these two places in the minds and feelings of Ethiopians themselves.

Two kinds of reaction are conspicuous. To the Ethiopian Modernist, Manz and Gondar are seen primarily as outlying pockets of conservatism. Their commitments to the past move them to resist certain changes promoted by the national government, with Manz protesting modern education and Gondar defending itself against nationalist centralization. They are regarded as backward areas, representative of the many forces that are "holding Ethiopia back," and to a certain extent are disdained.

To their inhabitants, on the other hand, these places are objects of intense 121 loyalty. For differences of identity among the Amhara are defined chiefly in 186 terms of their *agar*, or "home country." The size of one's *agar* is relative; it 823 depends on the context in which the symbol is used, and may be as small as a district or as large as a province. Whatever the referent, one's *agar* signifies more than a place of residence or provenience. It means "home," and all those whose families live there are regarded with special affection, while those out-

* On certain festive occasions the following antiphonal chant is declaimed in praise of "Taḡel" (the affectionate, "horse" name of Haile Selassie): [533]

[Leader:] *Mīn āla taḡel mīn āla?* [539]

[Chorus:] *Agarē la-saw agarē la-saw alsatēm alal*

[Leader:] What did Taḡel say, what did he say? [551]

[Chorus:] "My country to outsiders, my country to outsiders, I will not give!" said he.

50 / WAX & GOLD

- 121 side are regarded with reserve and suspicion, if not hostility. For this reason
 186 the word of native local authorities has always carried more weight than that
 823 of imported or distant authorities. For this reason the names of bars and cafés
 around Addis Ababa today are to a large extent place names. For this reason
 (575) the type of voluntary association which has aroused the most enthusiastic
 interest in Addis Ababa in recent years is the association based on a member-
 ship drawn from the same *agar*.⁵⁰ Regionalist sentiments are so intense in
 connection with these groups that some members of the Manz association, for
 example, have asserted that they would not admit to membership a person
 whose family originated in a district only a few kilometers outside the
 boundaries of Manz.

- 121 This type of orientation to Manz, Gondar, and the many other regions in
 Amhara country may be regarded as an instance of the more general phenom-
 enon referred to above as "primordial sentiments." These are sentiments
 which are based on the awareness of certain given qualities shared by the
 members of a group, qualities such as race, language, religious affiliation,
 tribal affiliation, as well as region of origin. The primordial sentiments ac-
 count for much of the cohesion and much of the vitality among the members
 of any traditional society. How these allegiances are affected in the course of
 modernization has considerable bearing on the future shape of the rapidly
 developing nations.

A number of factors inherent in modernization work to erode the primor-
 dial sentiments. Increased physical and social mobility tend to uproot the indi-
 vidual from the settings of family and home community in which these
 sentiments are produced and reinforced. Occupational position comes to
 replace membership in primordial groups as a primary determinant of status
 and identity. Secondary education, military training, and the development of
 national institutions and symbols promote the sentiment of nationalism to
 which these narrower allegiances are subordinated.

Other aspects of modernization, however, work in the opposite direction
 to intensify primordial sentiments. The education of members of minority
 groups gives them both a heightened sense of grievance and a voice with
 which to protest. The creation of new forms of wealth and power provides
 new bases for competition and conflict, processes which tend to be structured
 along lines already laid out by cleavages based on primordial differences. The
 insecurity aroused by the threat to tradition inherent in modernization also
 produces defensive reactions which often take the form of heightened alle-
 giance to such groups.

This intensification of primordial loyalties during modernization presents
 a problem which, for all their differences, nearly all the nations of Africa and
 Asia have in common. Whether the critical differences revolve about lan-
 guage, as in India; religion, as in Lebanon; geography, as in Indonesia; or

51 / *The Legacy of Manz and Gondar*

tribal affiliation, as in sub-Saharan Africa—the passions spent in the conflict of primordial groups have impeded the development of a civil society at the national level. The problem is of such moment that Clifford Geertz has defined the nature of the effort required to cope with it as of a revolutionary order.⁵¹ 121 •

Because of the disintegrative implications of primordial loyalties, so conspicuous in transitional societies, the ideas usually set forth for dealing with them have a tendency to reflect what we have called the "Conciliatory" perspective. On the one hand are those who conceive of tribalism or its counterparts as a major obstacle to the development of a national community, and see the chief hope for transitional societies in the effort to promote symbols and situations which excite the sentiment of nationalism as a substitute for primordial loyalties. On the other hand are those who appreciate the psychological advantages of retaining primordial identifications, and look rather for political and social mechanisms which will keep under control the explosive aspects of primordial loyalties.

Without denying the practical importance of such ideas, we would like to suggest an alternate emphasis, an emphasis on the positive aspects of traditional patterns—on their potentialities for reformation rather than for elimination or control. There is advantage in defining the durable aspects of tradition. The vitality of a people springs from feeling at home in its culture and from a sense of kinship with its past. The negation of all those sentiments acquired in childhood leaves man adrift, a prey to random images and destructive impulses. The only plausible alternative for a society which has been so uprooted is an order based on a rigid ideology and secured by a high degree of coercion. The most productive and liberating sort of social change is that built on continuity with the past.

This assumption may be elucidated by considering the nature of personality development. The human ego grows by incorporating new elements, discarding some old ones, and constantly reorganizing what it retains. The strongest egos, however, are those which have retained some solid identifications from childhood. The man with a strong ego may have substituted new religious, political, and occupational values for those of his father, but he has kept some general sense of oneness with his father, or original father-figures, all his life.

It is with respect to such general, archaic identifications that traditional primordial sentiments can be of positive use in times of rapid change. The specific content of early identifications can be replaced without sacrificing the deeply rooted, vitalizing sense of oneness with the original objects. In the Amhara case, Manz, Gondar, and other regions constitute such objects of identification: widely diffused symbols whose content must be modified with the times but which can endure as sources of inspiration in a changing society.

- [2] In what ways may the content of a primordial symbol be revised to benefit the developing national society? One way is through enlarging the scope of the referent. This is particularly feasible in the case of regionalist sentiments among the Amhara, for their concept of *agar* is, as we have seen, highly flexible. A native of Agäntchä, for example, may think of his *agar* now as Agäntchä, now as the sub-district of Gērā Meder, now as the district of Manz, now as Shoa Province, or even as Ethiopia as a whole. In each case, a feeling of inclusiveness would attach to anyone within the boundaries of the region in question, and he would be defined accordingly as *yāgarē saw* ("my countryman"). Thus a focus on the more inclusive reference of *agar* in the mass media and in educational institutions may serve to diffuse the libido invested in regional symbols and so expand, rather than destroy, the psychologically integrative functions of regional identifications.

A different process of reorientation is that which, instead of broadening the object of the particularistic attachment, focuses on aspects of the culture of the primordial group which are valuable in terms of universalistic criteria. One remains attached to the symbols of one's primordial groups, not because it is uniquely "chosen" in some way, not only because of the accident of birth and upbringing, but also because it embodies certain qualities which are intrinsically valuable according to the beliefs of the larger culture and/or which relate to some special function performed in behalf of the larger community. It involves a process of redefinition that might be termed a "rationalization" of primordial sentiment.

This process was exemplified, with an understandably high degree of self-awareness, in the personal experience of Sigmund Freud. Cosmopolitan though he was, Freud had a very intense primordial attachment to the Jewish people. As is well known, he rejected the particularistic beliefs of the Jewish tradition, both the religious mythology of Judaism and the chauvinistic concept of a Jewish nation. Yet throughout his life he maintained, and drew strength from, a lively sense of his identity as a Jew. In his own words, he was attracted to the symbolism of Jewish identity by "many obscure emotional forces, the more powerful as they are ineffable" and by "the clear consciousness of an inner identity, the secret of sharing the same type of soul."⁵² In addition, he thanked his Jewishness for two qualities which he found of essential importance in his career: freedom from prejudices which hamper the full use of the intellect, and the readiness to accept a position of solitary opposition.⁵⁸

In Freud's assessment of what it meant for him to be a Jew, we find an articulation of the three elements which constitute this process of rationalization of primordial sentiment: (1) rejection of exclusivist, particularistic be-

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liefs and values, (2) retention of the basic emotional tie and identification with the group in question, and (3) elaboration of the virtues of the group in terms of universalistic criteria. 121 •

This is a type of orientation to the primordial sentiments which has the effect of maximizing both traditional and modern values, for it retains the sources of security and identity provided by tradition yet defines them in ways that promote national solidarity and the creative resources of the national culture. It is an approach which may be illustrated, in concluding this chapter, by the cases of two modern-educated Amhara who identify themselves, in part, as a Manzē and a Gondarē.

"Balāčhaw" is an American-educated official of the Ethiopian government. Born and raised in Addis Ababa, his family originated in Manz, and he still has relatives who reside there. He is an ardent modernizer, anxious to see progressive leadership and the expansion of educational facilities provided in the provinces; yet he is also very sentimental about Amhara traditions and, in particular, his *agar* Manz. 121 159 829 [823]

To Balāčhaw, Manz symbolizes hard-core loyalty to blood and to land. It also symbolizes the will to fight stubbornly for one's rights and for what one thinks right. He sees the government's keen concern for its territorial boundaries as a direct reflection of the Manzē's determination to retain and acquire land. Balāčhaw gets much pleasure out of telling stories about the Manzē's almost foolhardy bravery in combatting the Italian invader. He reveals a "clear consciousness of an inner identity" with the Manzē in this regard, and says of himself: "You know, even as a child, and ever since, I have not been afraid of anybody."

"Makonnen" is a government official who was trained in western Europe. His family lives in Gondar, though he spent little time there after leaving for secondary school in Addis Ababa. In the course of his studies abroad, he had become estranged from the traditional ties and symbols of his Gondar-Amhara background. And yet now he speaks with great respect of the virtues of Gondarēs, their cultivated manner in personal relations, and their pride and wit in the use of language. The meaning of Gondar came to him almost in the manner of a revelation:

In the midst of my studies in Western Europe I had the chance one summer to visit a number of West African countries and then to return home and spend some time in Gondar. I had not thought very highly of my people before that trip, and what I experienced was a great surprise. What I found—what we have, that I did not find in the African countries I visited—is a special sort of dignity of manner. When I talked with the elders at Gondar I was moved to tears. That is something priceless; that is a great and irreplaceable national resource.

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- 121 It is spare vision to regard the Ethiopian past only as a source of obstacles to modernization, or as a matrix of primordial loyalties whose only issue can be discord and disruption. It is likewise constricting for Ethiopians to regard their past as useful only as a façade for exacting admiration from outsiders. The Ethiopian past can be, as the cases of Balāčhaw and Makonnen demonstrate, a source of identifications which are associated with specific virtues of national significance, and which Ethiopian cultural leaders can draw upon to help define for their country its unique composite character in the company of transitional societies.

3

THE WORLD OF THE AMHARA PEASANT

The life of the peasantry has been a constant setting for the Amhara drama. It is the faithful pedal point against which the ups and downs of Ethiopian history have been played. We cannot savor that history fully without becoming closely acquainted with the peasant himself.

If understanding the peasantry is important for a truer picture of the Abyssinian past, it is indispensable for a sensible approach to Ethiopia's future. Ethiopia is and will remain for a long time a predominantly agricultural nation, one whose exports—chiefly coffee, skins, and oilseeds—depend almost exclusively on rural output. The one economist to have discussed the problem at any length in print maintains that agriculture is the one area in which Ethiopia can reasonably expect significant economic development in the foreseeable future.¹ Conscious efforts to stimulate peasant productivity, however, may issue in stagnation or even setbacks if they are not based on a realistic understanding of the peasants' own attitudes and conditions of life.

Ethiopians who are striving to modernize their country have for the most part lost touch with the peasantry. If they were born and raised in one of the cities, they may have had no direct contact with the peasantry at all. If their origins are rural, they have been oriented all their school days toward gaining a modern education and tend, wittingly or not, to ignore what they can of their past. Nor are they helped much in this regard by foreign technical experts, who tend to have a modernist bias and typically know still less about the indigenous peasantry. Understanding of the peasantry by scholars, on the

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PREFACE

This book is the outgrowth of a relatively uninhibited encounter of a mind 121 bearing some of the ideas and methods of contemporary social science with the dominant traditional culture of a developing nation. As a result it embodies a variety of interests which, in more conventional work, would be pursued through separate writings. Broadly speaking, *Wax and Gold* is animated by three different forms of curiosity, each of which moves to the fore at different times. Proceeding first of all as an empirical social scientist, I have been curious about the nature of traditional Amhara culture. Shifting at certain junctures to the viewpoint of the social analyst, I have been concerned with examining the situation of action faced by thoughtful Ethiopians today. And throughout I have been moved, as a sociological theorist, to raise questions and suggest hypotheses regarding the more general significance of the phenomena examined in the course of my Ethiopian studies. If the book is therefore somewhat disjointed at moments, I hope the reader will be compensated by sharing some of my satisfaction in refusing to suppress one or another of these interests.

The motive which lies behind any scholar's effort to characterize an exotic culture is ultimately aesthetic. I freely admit to having been seduced by the charm of traditional Amhara life. Played out by an extraordinarily handsome people in a setting of great natural beauty and a climate often called "idyllic," it offers a gate through time to a state of being that is richly medi-

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- 121 other hand, has hitherto been impeded by two characteristics of humanistic
- * 565 and social studies. The historian's view has been limited by his reliance on written records that deal chiefly with the activities of men of power and the conceptions of literati. The ethnographer or traveler who tries to give the peasantry its due has usually concentrated on the more evident and accessible facts of custom—activities related to work, play, kinship, and ritual. The peasant's inner feelings and notions have perforce been neglected.²

In default of a widely disseminated sensibility to peasant realities, modernizing Ethiopians have thus come to view the peasantry in terms of misleading stereotypes: either romantically, as an embodiment of virtue, awaiting only proper leadership to realize their suppressed aspirations for freedom, justice, and progress; or else as inhabitants of a dark hinterland, barbarous in custom and blind with superstition. In this chapter we shall attempt a more empirical (128) account of one part of the Ethiopian peasant's world—that of the Amhara—with particular emphasis on the beliefs and values of the peasant himself. Our (114) account is based on seven months of residence among the Amhara peasantry, (12) using the observational techniques of participant observation, discreet questioning, analysis of folk expressions, and Thematic Apperception Tests (TAT).³

THE INSTITUTIONAL SETTING
OF PEASANT LIFE

- * 565
- 592 The homestead is the basic ecological and social unit of the Amhara
- [342] peasantry. The average homestead consists of from one to six small round
- [343] structures, built of wattle (or stone, as in Manz) and capped with conical thatched roofs. A well-equipped homestead will have one building for eating and sleeping, one for animals, one for grain storage, one as a kitchen, and one for entertaining guests; though for many peasants all these functions are served by a single large building. The homestead is normally located on land worked by the peasant. While most peasants plow land whose use is theirs by hereditary right (*rist*), some are tenants on estates owned by the king, lords, (423) monasteries, or older relatives. (427)

The smallest homesteads consist simply of husband, wife, and unmarried children. Sometimes a young married son will remain within the family home and, much less frequently, a young married daughter. Occasionally an older relative will be sustained there, or a younger relative will be brought up there. One or more servants—slaves, until a generation ago—complete the (556) household. The wealthier the peasant, the more relatives and servants will be found in the homestead.

- 621 At times hamlets will be formed by the clustering of households of a number
- 602 of married brothers or other kin. These tend to have a patriarchal cast; if the
- (592) father is no longer living, the oldest male relative usually assumes jurisdiction for the affairs of the hamlet. But the nucleated village, contrary to erroneous

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Loyalty is proclaimed all around. Conviviality is the norm among peers, though the authoritarian character of the Amhara family inhibits camaraderie between those of greatly differing ages. Unlimited succor in time of sickness and death and profuse commensality in happier hours are important values to the Amhara peasant and ones about which he is self-conscious and articulate. 565* 602 571 181 183 (561)

Reverence for one's fathers is perhaps the key legitimating principle in the structure of Amhara morality. This is the outgrowth and foundation of a social system which makes children devoted servants of their fathers and keeps men under their fathers' control until they are fully adult. The fierce loyalty to the symbols and practices of the church is experienced as being true to "the faith of our fathers," and it is an analogous devotion to "the land of our fathers" that moves the Amhara to a steadfast defense of his hereditary farmland and the borders of his country. 565* 593 577 181 183

The chief areas of conflict within the Amhara peasant's conception of the good life are those of sex and aggression. These conflicts appear to reflect the mixture of Christian and pagan cultures in Abyssinian history. From Christianity come beliefs that marriage is sacred, divorce is not legitimate, and adultery is taboo. The Amhara peasant, while respecting the embodiment of these norms in the lives of priests, feels justified in having sexual relations outside marriage and in getting a divorce whenever the need arises. Perhaps it can be argued that this represents a conflict between norms and practice, but the legitimate tone of the non-Christian behavior suggests that it might well be considered an alternative norm, a carry-over from the ancient culture which legitimized polygamy. 565* 577 779 183 181 581 586 637

Attitudes concerning the use of violence represent a clear instance of conflict of norms. The precepts "Do not kill" and "Love thy neighbor," though not regarded as constituting the crux of Christian ethics, are known and acknowledged in Abyssinia. The rare priest or elder who embodies the classic ideal of Christian love is appreciated as a man of the highest virtue. The fearless killer, on the other hand, embodies another ideal of no less importance—that of being *guabaz*, brave and manly. The peasant who assaults his neighbor because the latter has usurped his land, committed adultery with his wife, injured his *zamad*, or insulted him grievously is following an ethic of cardinal importance in Amhara culture.¹⁴ 565* 779 577 183 181

The Central Confrontation

The foregoing has indicated some of the main concepts through which the Amhara peasant perceives the common objects of human experience, and what meaning they have for him. Since it is an exploratory account, it lacks the unity that would come from the consistent application of a rigorous observational procedure or of a coherent, analytic conceptual scheme. Yet even at the present stage of inquiry it is possible to move toward a more unified state- 565* 121 82 771

* 565 ment on the subject, by following some of the suggestions advanced by Robert
 • 121 Redfield for the comparison of world views.¹⁵

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 771 "What does a people confront as it looks out on the world?" Redfield asks. After proposing a triangle of general objects confronted by all peoples—man, nature, and God—he goes on to suggest two specific questions: (1) Are these objects viewed as parts of a common matrix, each infusing the other, or are they viewed as separate and distinct entities? (2) Are they viewed as equally significant, or is special attention paid to one at the expense of the others?

As a point of departure for discussing the world view of the Amhara peasant as a whole, we may consider Redfield's characterization of the "primitive world view." In his account of a generalized primitive world view, Redfield posits that man, nature, and God are perceived as parts of an indissoluble unity, lacking really distinct identities. In the primitive outlook nature is personalized; the supernatural infuses the natural; and man's actions and traits resemble those of the deities. If this is so, then one may say that the Amhara peasant has passed beyond this primitive conception in the direction of differentiating man, nature, and God; but he has not proceeded very far. His God is conceived as a transcendental, self-sufficient Being, abstracted from particular earthly manifestations, and dwelling only at the crown of heaven. He sees nature as having a character and imposing demands of its own, not as a bearer of divine and human properties. He sees man as lacking the powers and virtues of divine beings and at the same time different in kind and higher in status than anything which exists in nature. Yet while these three objects are endowed with distinct identities and autonomous natures, they are conceived as closely and continuously interdependent. Much of what takes place in nature, such as a flood or a bad harvest, is attributed to divine agency, and the character of certain natural objects, like groves of trees and pools of water, is colored by associations with the supernatural. In human affairs, supernatural beings of various sorts are constantly active, and in the case of the *tābot*, the holy ark, a divine object has been thoroughly personalized. Man's life, moreover, is seen as intimately bound up with the vicissitudes of nature, and a personal relationship subsists between man and his friends and enemies in the animal world. In short, the Amhara looks on man, nature, and God as *separate but closely interconnected entities*.

[181] While each of these three entities is an object of great significance to the Amhara peasant, moreover, it may be said that man is regarded as the most significant of the three; and in particular, the problem of *human aggression* may be identified as the dominant theme in the Amhara peasant's outlook on life.

Nature, to the Amhara peasant, presents no outstanding challenge, no perplexing problem, no compelling attraction. Nature is to be adjusted to carefully and quietly. God and other supernatural beings become crucial objects

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in time of crisis, but otherwise occupy an inconspicuous place in the Amhara's world. His prayers and oaths, his calendar, and his simple precautions against evil spirits are matters of habit. He has no driving concern with the supernatural in his daily life. 565
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In the human realm, collective symbols and endeavors are not a major focus of attention. The demands of family, church, and state are, like the seasons, familiar and unproblematic; like nature, these institutions call for simple adjustment. On the personal side, sexuality plays a modest part in the Amhara's outlook. Sex as such is not talked about much. It is enjoyed, beneath the surface of social life, with little fuss or problems other than the usual practical ones. [831]

By contrast, the phenomenon of man's aggression is seen, discussed, pondered, and worried about to a considerable extent. The Amhara sees himself and his fellows as prone to aggression as soon as hunger no longer checks them or festivity has raised their spirits. He is wary of the stranger, forever fearful that the unfamiliar *saw* may attack with the evil eye. He sees the outsider as bent on aggrandizement, constantly plotting to seize his patch of earth. How to keep man's potential for aggression under control is a recurrent question in Amhara experience. The Amhara considers a pitiless regime of fasting to be the only way he can keep his hostile impulses subdued, and believes that children must not be spared the rod lest they be rude and aggressive. He withholds esteem from young men on the grounds that they are prone to throw insults and pick fights. On the other hand, he sets up occasions, like the whipping battles on Buhē and the rough play and insulting at Christmas, when the acting out of aggressive impulses is controlled through being carried on in a legitimate context. He idealizes the men of peace, the priest and the elder, for their work in putting moral pressure on people to observe the fasts and to reconcile quarrels. 565*
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At the same time, the Amhara peasant is greatly concerned about ways and means of improving his capacity for aggression, both through the technique of litigation and through violent means. He trains his sons to be brave and to fight well, and chants with enthusiasm the inflaming martial verses of *shillala*. He idealizes the fighter as much if not more than the man of peace. Litigants, hunters, and warriors keep vital the Amhara ideal of masculinity, which every peasant must cultivate in order to protect his land and his honor. 565*
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The Amhara peasant is simultaneously preoccupied with the stimulation and the control of aggressive behavior. The previously mentioned conflict of norms regarding violence is perhaps the chief area of moral conflict in his thinking about the good life. Though nature, God, and other aspects of man's life occupy much of his attention from time to time, it appears that the phenomenon of human aggression dominates the confrontation between the Amhara peasant and the objects of his experience. 565*
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MODERNIZATION AND THE PEASANT

*565 At the beginning of this chapter we alluded to stereotyped views of the
 • 121 peasantry held by modern-educated Ethiopians who have no meaningful communication with them. It may be fruitful at this point to consider the relationship between the peasant's world and Ethiopia's quest for modernity in the form of a series of critical responses to these stereotypes.

Three views of the peasantry are of particular relevance. One sees the peasant as exploited, hence potentially progressive; one sees the peasant as uneducated, hence reactionary; and a third sees the peasant as traditionalist, hence irrelevant to Ethiopia's modernizing culture. In responding to these opinions we shall discuss, first, the peasant's conservatism; second, areas of the peasant's receptivity to change; and, finally, aspects of peasant culture which may have a positive value for Ethiopia in transition.

Peasant Conservatism

Those who eulogize the simple integrity of peasant life and regret the peasant's suppressed condition in a social order pejoratively termed "feudal" at times maintain that with a radical change of leadership in the government the peasantry would respond with renewed economic initiative and progressive orientation. Given leaders they can trust, it is argued, the Amhara peasants would support radical efforts to restructure their lives and would participate meaningfully in democratic political procedures designed to promote social change.

*565 This view overlooks the fact, which has impressed travelers of many cen-
 121 turies in Ethiopia, that the Abyssinian peasant clings to his traditional ways
 178 with unruffled tenacity. The flavor of his conservatism may be illustrated by
 181 the following conversation with an unusually open-minded peasant in Manz. The man was complaining about the dangers presented by a little stream between his home and the local church during the rainy season. "If you can't put up some kind of bridge," I suggested, "why do you not stretch a heavy rope across it so people can hold on to something and not be swept away?" "That is a good idea," he replied, "but we just do not do that sort of thing around here."

Such behavior has been explained by many observers, Ethiopians and foreigners alike, as due to simple laziness. No peasant can afford to be simply lazy, however. The roots of this inertia go deeper. They touch a number of fundamental features in Amhara peasant culture which orient the peasantry against the introduction of novelty.

*565 One of these is the concept of fate (*eddil*) which the Amhara invoke to
 121 account for the ups and downs of their lives. *Eddil* appears to signify the
 777 working of God's will insofar as it affects human purposes, and is to be re-
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garded as more important than human effort in attaining one's goals. "If a man works hard, he may remain poor. If he does not work hard, he may become wealthy. The outcome is due to fate." The peasant is discouraged from determined efforts to make changes in his environment because of the feeling that no matter what he does, God's disposition is what really counts.

In addition to feeling that innovation is ineffectual, the Amhara peasant tends to feel that it is immoral. Reverence for fathers and forefathers is, we observed, a key element of the Amhara ethos. This patriarchal sentiment informs the Amhara's defense not only of his land and his religion, but of the procedures of daily living as well. It is not good to deviate from the familiar ways of doing things because they, too, have been handed down by "our fathers"; this is a phrase which interlards Amharic conversation.

A number of other, more specific, norms have had the effect of discouraging inventiveness among the Amhara. Experimentation with matter was inhibited by the disdain for puttering about with one's hands—doing anything, that is, similar to the activities of the socially dejected artisans and slaves. Hence the peasant retains the same rudimentary tools for wresting a subsistence from nature that he has used for millennia, and searches about the woods for a properly shaped piece of wood rather than improve his art of carpentry.¹⁶ Experimentation with ideas was inhibited by the anti-intellectual cast of Amhara culture, which discredits the pursuit of ideas for their own sake. Ideas pertain either to the unchangeable mysteries, as expressed in the religious literature, or to the unchanging verities of human experience, as expressed in folk proverbs. Ideas are not entertained as "adventure," to use Whitehead's term—as a source of novel possibilities in life, a guide rather than a justification of custom.

Two factors are especially significant in accounting for the Amhara peasant's reluctance to use ideas drawn from experience and insight for the purpose of reshaping custom. One is the fact that the primary medium for the elaboration and dissemination of such ideas—the written word—was affected by a number of restrictions in Amhara culture.¹⁷ As a consequence, although writing has been known in Abyssinia for two millennia, it had almost never

* The act of writing was considered to be inherently shameful: like any manual activity other than farming and fighting, writing was regarded as degrading work, the business of scribes whose status was thereby not much higher than that of potters and metalsmiths. Only a small percentage of the clergy learned to write, and those who did were rarely adept at it. The products of writing, moreover, were deemed either too sacred or too nefarious to warrant giving laymen easy access to their medium. Script belonged above all else to the realm of scripture. The awe felt for holy writs was a deterrent against using that medium for other than devotional purposes. The chief private use of writing was for the magic formulas of the *dabtar*, another connection with the supernatural that discouraged its lay practice. The *dabtar*'s art served injurious as well as beneficent purposes, and the fear that those who learned to write might stumble onto potent phrases was reason for restricting that skill to a small group of the initiated.

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*565 been employed as a medium for promulgating new ideas or discussing contemporary problems. Another feature of Amhara culture that helps to account for the mental inertia of the peasantry is its emphasis on the value of deference and obedience to authority. The Amhara typically rely on legitimate authority figures to define appropriate responses to new situations, and regard the delegation of powers as a diminution of the status of such authorities. The peasant has thus refrained from initiating changes in the public domain because the prerogative of taking initiative is generally reserved to ecclesiastical and political authorities.

*565 *Receptivity to Change*

121 Consideration of the peasant's readiness to follow the lead of legitimate
177 authorities already points to an inadequacy of the second stereotype we have
178 mentioned: that which sees the peasant as hopelessly ignorant and backward,
hence intractable from the viewpoint of a program of modernization. For
while the Amhara peasant is likely to resist the efforts of some unknown official from Addis Ababa to introduce change in his local environment, he does
tend to follow the directives and imitate the example of the local authorities
whom he knows and who shape the course of decisions and sanctions at the
[137] local level. Thus it is, for example, that the eucalyptus tree—imported by
Emperor Menelik, taken to the provinces by nobles, and eventually planted
by individual peasants—has come to dot the Amhara countryside. How
quickly such change can take place is shown by the recent acceptance of
photography in many provincial regions. In 1950, peasants in many Amhara
areas strenuously objected to having their pictures taken, in part at least for
fear of the camera as a harbinger of the evil eye. By 1960, visitors to some of these
same areas were being deluged with requests for photographs. In the interim
these peasants had been exposed to numerous photographs of the Emperor
and high government officials and had observed their local authorities seizing
every chance they could to be photographed.

Yet it is clear that the Amhara peasant will not imitate everything that is
accepted by his traditional authorities. When a new custom strikes him as
too outlandish his resistance can become adamant, as was abundantly demonstrated
when the court of Susneyos carried out its ill-fated conversion to
Catholicism. In analyzing the peasant's receptivity to change it is important
to distinguish as independent variables: (1) the degree of acceptability of
the agents of change, and (2) the extent to which the proposed change is
congruent with traditional beliefs and values.

The whole question of the nature of peasant opposition and receptivity to
modernizing programs may be discussed most realistically by focusing on
[744] a concrete area of attempted change. The material I have assembled is most
detailed for the case of public health, an area to which the government has

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paid increased attention in recent years. A new phase of public health endeavor in this decade was marked by the imposition of a nationwide health tax in 1960.

Health has become a prime objective in Ethiopia's modernization program because of a growing realization that the wide prevalence of malaria, tuberculosis, typhus, intestinal parasites, syphilis, trachoma, leprosy, and other diseases continues to sap the vitality of the nation's productive forces and to visit misery on countless peasant families. The public health forces in Ethiopia (Ministry of Public Health, WHO mission, and AID Public Health Division) have long understood that Ethiopia's health needs cannot be met by piecemeal therapy. They have undertaken a program of preventive measures by preparing public health teams in the medical college at Gondar. The college trains health officers, community nurses, and sanitarians within a common framework, so that when they go into the field they will understand each other's tasks from the start. The first public health center employing such a team was opened in the late fifties; Ethiopia's Second Five-Year Plan envisions one such center for every fifty thousand people by 1967.

The objective of these public health workers is to transmit a number of instructions—concerning personal hygiene, environmental sanitation, early care for illness, and isolation of contagious diseases—which are at variance with customary beliefs and practices. Experience with comparable programs elsewhere suggests that the success of such health teams is by no means assured.¹⁸ What are the forces working for and against the acceptance of these new instructions by the Amhara peasantry? Both negative and positive factors may be identified with respect to each of the three general categories previously referred to: the general outlook regarding change; attitudes toward the agents of change; and degree of compatibility between the new cultural items and the old.

The Amhara peasant's general resistance to change may be presumed operative here as elsewhere, particularly since health practices are often associated with religious beliefs and sentiments. Defense of indigenous therapies has in fact become a significant channel for the expression of traditionalist sentiment, a channel that has even been utilized on occasion in the Addis Ababa newspapers.¹⁹ And a general posture of resistance to changes in the field of health is supported by the interests of traditional practitioners, *dabtarā* and *tanquāy*, who are in danger of losing clientele if modern-trained health workers come to win their allegiance.

Counter to this conservative drag, on the other hand, is the peasant's powerful desire for one basic change in his life circumstances, namely, the reduction of morbidity and mortality. Despite his idyllic conception of paradise and his frequent contention that life on earth is something of little value, the Amhara wants to avoid death. Even from the religious point of view he is

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- *565 motivated to live as long as possible: the monk wants to live longer in order
 • 121 to get closer to God by prayer, and the worldly man wants to live long enough
 177 to atone for his sins so that he may enter paradise. Health thus rates as one of
 178 the most important values. The expressions for greeting and farewell stress
 75 health. Most of the prayers and vows offered have to do with achieving health.
 761 Long, painful pilgrimages are made for cures, and much money is spent for
 the remedies of native practitioners and for amulets to ward off illness. This
 powerful desire for health and life operates as a lever to overcome the resist-
 ance to change.
- *565 Toward the bearers of new ideas designed to satisfy this desire for reduced
 121 morbidity and mortality, however, the peasant's stance is suspicious and un-
 177 sympathetic at the outset. He regards Ethiopians who have been educated by
 829 Westerners as contaminated by alien norms and beliefs. They appear to him
 as Ethiopians, but also as strangers—as "black *faranj*"—with their European
 clothes and their unorthodox eating and smoking habits. He tends to distrust
 their motives, to suspect them of being out to take advantage of him in some
 way. And he resents their overt or implicit disparagement of his way of life,
 particularly his practices in so sensitive an area as sanitation.
- *565 Against such obstacles one cultural factor that serves to present the health
 121 worker as an acceptable agent of change is the Amhara peasant's deference to
 177 the man of learning. The public health worker is in a position to inherit some
 744 of the awe felt for the learned *dabtarā*, especially since the health teams
 (554) operate out of centers which provide therapy as well as instruction, which
 gives them the benefit of association with the quasi-magical powers attributed
 to one who performs successful treatment. In addition, he can be aided by the
 Amhara peasant's personal devotion to someone who has helped him and
 won his confidence. Whether this devotion can be stimulated depends, in the
 last analysis, on the character and resourcefulness of the public health workers
 themselves. Those who are able to communicate in a dignified manner with
 the peasants, who avoid dealing with them as an inferior and backward
 people, who refrain from flaunting the most important local norms, and who
 are on good terms with local authorities and respected men, have a substantial
 chance of being accepted after an initial period of suspicion and alienation.
 Thus it was that a Gojjami peasant, asked why some of the local people were
 hearkening to the advice of the public health team at Dabra Marqos, ex-
 plained: "We have come to realize that what you tell us to do is for our own
 advantage, not yours." Elsewhere in Gojjam, a similar response was the
 eventual issue of a more pronounced initial rejection of public health workers.
 In the village of Dajan doors were closed against a venereal disease team
 which was taking blood samples of the entire population for Kahn test analy-
 sis. Popular suspicion was voiced in a number of ways; the health workers
 were accused of selling blood, of being missionaries, and of otherwise trying

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to cheat the locals. The health officer in charge of the team then brought some of the objectors to the mobile laboratory, patiently explained what was going on, and how it would benefit the people. Before long word got around that these outsiders were not so evil after all, and the doors of Dajan opened. 565*
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Given the possibility that the Amhara peasant may come to acknowledge the public health worker as a legitimate agent of change, what about the discrepancy between the ideas advanced by the public health workers and the ideas of his traditional culture? The conception of the causation of illness is radically different in the two cultures. Since the peasant views the etiology of disease as a function of the will of supernatural beings, on what grounds could he adhere to prophylactic measures based on naturalistic conceptions? 565*
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Valid though our characterization of the peasant's concept of causation may be, it is nevertheless a very simplified one. It is unlikely that any world view is totally devoid of some sort of naturalistic explanations, just as, conversely, well-educated moderns often cling to residues of "superstition." Though the Amhara's general framework for understanding causation is not naturalistic, he does possess a number of specific notions which can be interpreted as naturalistic or protonaturalistic. Here are some examples:

- (1) The belief that an excessively dirty house brings sickness (even though in practice animals are permitted to urinate and defecate indoors and strings of soot to hang from the rafters). (231)
- (2) A vague notion that the daily washing of hands, mouth, and feet is related to health. (515)
- (3) The concept of *metch*, an ailment involving fever and pains, believed to come from exposure to dirty places as well as excessive exposure to the sun (though the devil is often thought to be the conveyer of the ailment).
- (4) The concept of *gershā*, a notion that a convalescent is liable to relapse unless he refrains from eating unaccustomed foods, resumes work slowly, stays out of the sun, and washes his body and clothes. (758)
- (5) A latent concept of contagion, found in: (a) the belief that smelling the urine of another will give one a cold, (b) the belief that the breath of a typhus patient will communicate his disease, and (c) the custom of referring to all diseases which can be given by one person to another as "zār sickness."

Even when the explanations set forth by the health workers deviate too much from what the peasant can possibly conceive as plausible, there may still be grounds to justify his accepting some strange advice through an appeal to more familiar beliefs and interests less directly related to the matter at hand. Thus, while peasants have been reluctant to accept the sanitarian's argument that diseases will be prevented by sanitizing the water supply through building wells, they have often been persuaded to build wells by the prospect of securing a more convenient source of water.

Measuring the relative strength of forces supporting and opposing change

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- *565 among the peasantry in public health and other fields of planned development
 • 121 is a task that requires intensive empirical studies.²⁰ But it should be sufficient-
 177 ly clear from the foregoing that the view of the Amhara peasantry as incorrigibly recalcitrant and reactionary is a rather shallow one. Amhara peasant culture contains potentialities for change that are as real as its most rigid beliefs and its substantial antipathy to change. The challenge to social statesmanship and social science alike is to understand the peasant's world in a more analytically precise way so that the diverse potentialities for change can be identified, but in the context of the total structure of peasant life.

The Legacy of Peasant Culture

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 121 Our discussion so far has treated the peasant as a wholly passive entity in contemporary Ethiopia. Whether the emphasis has been on the peasant's resistance to innovation or on his receptivity to change, he has been considered from one point of view: that of the Modernist anxious to transform Ethiopian society according to secular ideals. Common to both the modern-educated Ethiopians, who consider the peasant primarily an object for manipulation and coercion, and to those who think more in terms of providing friendly leadership and perhaps securing future political support, is the assumption that they really have nothing to learn from peasant culture, that peasant culture has nothing of substance to contribute to an Ethiopia in transition.

Whether this assumption is just or not can only be decided by Ethiopians themselves. Ironically, it is easier for an outsider to question it and to search for aspects of peasant culture that might contribute to a more meaningful national experience during the coming decades of transition. The type of possible contribution to be explored here concerns the mode of defining and responding to the situation of rapid change which Ethiopia has entered.

The social environment of contemporary Ethiopia is very tense and affords few outlets for the constructive release of tensions. The discrepancy between the growing desire for aspects of modern culture and the persistence of many old customs and problems has generated much impatience, anxiety, and ennui among the modern-educated. Their sense of inadequacy vis-à-vis Western "metropolitan" standards is no less painful for their having escaped a long heritage of colonial domination, and combined with a sense of failure to move rapidly toward aspired goals has created in many of the modern-educated marked self-destructive tendencies. Insofar as this destructiveness has not turned inward it has been projected outward against other elements inside Ethiopia and without.

One of these targets is the uneducated mass of the people, who, as we have seen, are often regarded as so backward that the only way one can bring progress to them is through coercion and authoritarian manipulation. Another target, naturally enough, has been the higher officials of the govern-

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ment. Of particular interest here is the fact that these officials have frequently been condemned in total terms for their alleged "selfishness" and "hypocrisy." Indeed, one of the outstanding characteristics of the modern-educated is a highly moralistic disposition which leads to a constant evaluation, and unmasking, of everyone within the broad orbit of Ethiopian political life in morally uncompromising terms. 565* 121 •

The sources of this disposition are complex and not fully to be explained here. One factor would seem to be the ascendance of a concern for rationality and its related insistence on integrity, in opposition to the traditional patterns of deviousness and equivocation symbolized by wax and gold. Another would seem to be a growing Rousseauian concern for the "natural rights" of the people, and the related view of the powers supporting the *ancien régime* as selfishly and hypocritically depriving the people of these rights. What the consequences of this disposition may be is a question of greater urgency. For it leads to the insistence on purity of heart as the essential political virtue, a demand which necessarily results in demoralization of public life and political fanaticism.²¹

While this sort of disposition is natural to the situation of the modern-educated, hence not simply to be wished away, it is clearly out of touch with the traditional Amhara mentality. Insofar as the modern-educated may seek alternatives to a purist, sentimental, and somewhat hysterical approach to politics, they may find themselves nourished by contact, through personal communication or through the medium of literature, with the "cooler" approach of the Amhara peasant. 565* 121 181 571 828

A feature of Amhara peasant culture discussed earlier in this chapter is the centrality of its orientation to man and to the phenomenon of human aggression in particular. To know the Amhara peasant at all closely is to appreciate how cautious he is about the intentions of others. He does not assume that he can count on others, though they may make promises. Before engaging in any secular transaction, such as lending money to a neighbor, entering into litigation, or taking on a servant, he insists on securing a guarantor (*wäss*) who agrees to make good for damages caused by the man he is backing. He does not assume that others may be benevolently disposed toward him; he suspects that behind every protestation of admiration and fealty lurks some quest for personal advantage. He does not assume that superior social status entails superior moral worth. Wryly commenting on his ambivalence toward superiors toward whom he shows such deference, he describes his posture as one of "bowing in front, and passing gas in the rear." In short, he is on guard at all times, coping with the presumed selfishness and hypocrisy of others and pursuing his own interests in a very sober and manipulative way.

At the same time the Amhara peasant's low estimate of man's potential does

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*565 not bring him to a position of rejecting man. On the contrary, man is ac-
 • 121 cepted, with all his frailties, for what he is. The Amhara's patterns of life are
 181 shaped, neither to overwhelm man with guilt for his shortcomings, nor to
 829 pressure him into personal or social reform, nor to deprive his worldly exist-
 ence of all enjoyment and significance; but rather to accommodate human
 realities and transcendent values to one another in such a way that neither is
 seriously compromised. He honors the value of non-violence, but indirectly,
 by relegating its observance to a morally differentiated role, the priest. He
 honors the value of marital fidelity, embodied again by the priest; but he lives
 comfortably, following the inclinations of the old Adam, in a status defined
 as technically excommunicate. He accepts the reality of hostility in human
 relations and adjusts to this reality by encouraging it where socially useful,
 curbing its socially disruptive aspects through fasting, and by channeling its
 expression where possible through litigation before judges, argumentation
 before elders, and games on festive occasions.

The Amhara peasant's outlook is both realistic and humanitarian. He does
 not expect political leaders to be morally pure, for he understands that all men
 are imperfect; *saw yallam*. He is not upset by the "selfishness" and "insincer-
 ity" of *Realpolitik*—awareness of which has sometimes been a demoralizing
 factor among the masses in Western countries—because *Realpolitik* is the
 stuff of his daily life. At the same time he seeks practical arrangements where-
 by human interests can be furthered and human conflicts can be contained.
 Insofar as this characteristic orientation of Amhara peasant culture comes
 to permeate the outlook of Ethiopia's modernizers—and it has never been
 wholly absent—it may help to reduce the intensity of those unrealistic de-
 mands and inhumanitarian impulses which are endemic in a society in transi-
 tion to modernity.

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THE EMERGING ADOLESCENT

While it is clear, as we have argued thus far, that a modernizing society stands to benefit from retaining or redefining many aspects of its traditional culture, it is also clear that in certain areas discontinuity is indispensable if significant change is to be brought about. Just what these areas are is something which presumably varies from nation to nation, though cross-cultural regularities may perhaps be uncovered in the course of further research. In the case of Ethiopia's incipient modernization, at least two subsystems of the traditional social system of the ruling Amhara have already undergone some sort of structural change: that of "secondary socialization," the complex of processes whereby skills and values necessary for adult life are imparted to adolescents; and that of the stratification system—the complex of arrangements whereby status is allocated to members of a society in accord with the various values upheld by the society.

An important precondition for the changes which have taken place in both of these areas was the establishment of a permanent capital: Addis Ababa, founded by Menelik in 1887¹ and now home for nearly half a million Ethiopians. Menelik's institution of the first government school in Addis Ababa in 1908 marked the beginning of a slow but steady process of introducing some of Ethiopia's youth to the novel skills and norms of modern Western culture. The concentration of power in Addis Ababa through the reign of Haile Selassie has diminished the status of the traditional Amhara elites and brought

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- to the fore men whose prestige and influence rest to some extent on new criteria. In this chapter and the one which follows, these two areas of structural change will be examined with respect to their continuity and discontinuity with the Abyssinian past.

882 In Amhara culture, adolescence scarcely exists as a concept, let alone as a problem. While there are Amharic words which signify "young person," there is no word in Amharic that specifically denotes a *transitional* stage between childhood and adulthood. The goals of a stage of transition to adult status, which to us have become problematic—continuity of the social order and crystallization of personal identity—are customarily attained among the Amhara as a matter of course.

178 In Ethiopia's modernizing sector, however, society and the individual have
882 been affected by numerous changes all at once. Adult standards have become confused; available roles have multiplied beyond comprehension; new agents and techniques of secondary socialization have supplemented the old. Overnight, adolescence has become both a category and a challenge.

COMING OF AGE IN ABYSSINIA

121 In according the individual recognition as an adult, society tends to bring
881 some of its most powerful and explicit integrative forces to bear upon him.

In many societies the transition to adulthood is accomplished in part by means of some formal ceremony in which the society corners the young person and puts its stamp upon him. Whether by way of earlobe piercing or ritual whipping, confirmation or graduation, the adolescent generally undergoes some rite which marks his coming of age and obliges him to fulfil himself as an acceptable member of adult society. In some societies, the rites are so devised that they literally represent the "death" of the child and his symbolic resurrection in a new, adult status.²

881 Such transition rites are conspicuously absent from Amhara culture. Quite the contrary: as a young Amhara approaches puberty he is unobtrusively withdrawn from participation in his culture's most solemn ritual, celebration of the Eucharist. Girls of about twelve and boys about fourteen, if they ask for Communion, are simply refused by the priests and told to go away. Thenceforth, until they marry in the church or, if they marry civilly, until their dying hour, they are not permitted to partake of the Holy Sacrament. The only exception to this rule is in the case of some deacons, who earn the right to continued participation in the Mass at the expense of remaining celibate until marriage (a price not always paid in practice).

* 883 Another way in which societies tend to mediate the transition to adulthood
561 is through the institution of adolescent peer groups which in various ways help the young person prepare for adult status. Such groups have taken a wide variety of forms. There have been, for example, the several types of age sets in African age-graded societies; mystic orders for youths attached to

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Egyptian mosques; youth dormitories and community houses in certain tribes in India; the academic and athletic youth organizations of ancient Athens and Sparta; not to mention the numerous teen-age associations of modern Western society.³ 883* 561

Here again, the adolescent Amhara is not involved in any such social forms. The advent of puberty is associated with the growing up and out of childhood groups, the gangs of shepherds who spend their days together in work and play. The girl of eleven or twelve is expected to spend all her time at home, under careful supervision. The boy of thirteen or fourteen has abandoned the shepherd's life for farming, in the company of older relatives, and soon becomes increasingly preoccupied with his private economic and erotic interests. His family elders are likely to warn him not to make friends with other youths outside the family.⁴ For a number of adolescent boys to get together outside of festive occasions is, to the traditional Amhara mind, a sign that something wrong is afoot.

The absence of adolescent rites and age groups reflects the individualistic character of Amhara social organization, a subject to which we shall turn in chapter vii. Nevertheless, Amhara society catches young people in its grasp and guides them to adulthood just as firmly and surely as does a society which has many collective arrangements for its adolescents. It does this by means of a well-ordered program for growing up. The road from childhood to adulthood is one series of informal, unproblematic stages through which the growing person adjusts to progressively increased responsibilities and progressively detailed norms. After infancy, there is normally no break in continuity in the whole process. 121 88 182 85 561 181

Toward Adult Work Roles

Following a long and indulged infancy, the Amhara child is early taught the rudiments of work responsibility. At the age of three or four, children are given simple chores, such as shooing chickens from grain drying in the sun or collecting bits of firewood. Somewhat older children are expected to protect the crops against birds, farm animals, and baboons. The Amhara becomes apprenticed in the main vocation of his childhood—tending the herds—almost as soon as he can run about, and six-year-old shepherds play a crucial part in the Amhara economy. 857 868 855 867

Boys retain the responsibility for tending the herds at least until the age of twelve, but by then they have already been initiated into a number of adult work activities. At about eight or nine years the Amhara boy begins to do his share of the harvesting, sickling the wheat, barley, ~~peas~~, or beans and loading the crops in piles he will help transport to the threshing place. He becomes adept at directing the cattle round and round the threshing floor and at winnowing the grain from the chaff. At times he helps with the weeding.

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*883 that parents still wield considerable moral influence over the modern adolescents, more so even than their peers, is shown by the figures in Table 3.

593 This persistence of parental influence keeps the Ethiopian adolescent anchored in his traditional culture and accounts in part for a noticeable conservatism among Ethiopian students generally. With respect to such matters as morality, etiquette, family solidarity, and religion, students are strongly inclined to follow their parents' precepts.

While this deep-grained attachment to their parents gives the modern adolescents a sense of stability and security, it is also responsible for consider-

TABLE 3

RELATIVE INFLUENCE OF PARENTS AND FRIENDS ON STUDENTS

EXTENT TO WHICH STUDENTS SAY THEY FOLLOW ADVICE	SECONDARY SCHOOL		COLLEGE MALES (per cent)
	Males (per cent)	Females (per cent)	
<i>Of parents:</i>			
Always.....	46	35	17
Usually.....	43	60	65
Not often.....	11	5	18
<i>Of friends:</i>			
Always.....	19	8	8
Usually.....	47	61	53
Not often.....	34	31	39
Number.....	(396)	(40)	(197)

*883 able strain in their lives. For there are few families—less than three per cent of our sample—in which the students do not remark some significant area of disagreement between their parents and themselves. The modest steps toward [561] modernity that Ethiopia has taken have already kindled a smoldering conflict between generations, perhaps for the first time in Ethiopian history. It is against that background of conflict that we now examine the condition in changing Ethiopia of the three main sociological functions of adolescence: 121 preparation for adult work roles, preparation for marriage roles, and integration 128 into the adult intellectual and moral order. 182

873 Preparation for Work

463 The most conspicuous function of the secondary schools and colleges in 182 Ethiopia is to train young people for careers unknown in their traditional

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search and only to the highest grades of secondary school and college, three questions regarding unscientific beliefs were included. In a pilot study of sixty secondary school seniors and juniors, 42 per cent held the belief that "a person can be made sick by the evil eye of a *budā*," and 33 per cent believed that "too much learning results in madness." To the one question asked of my entire sample: "Do you believe that some learned *dabtarā* can cause rain to fall or stop?," 16 per cent of 500 secondary and 7 per cent of 200 college seniors and juniors said "Yes."

This persistence among the educated youth of traditional beliefs which run counter to the consensus of modern scientists has been attributed by Lord to the inadequacies of the Ethiopian school system. This is as might be expected, inasmuch as most Ethiopian teachers have had relatively little education themselves and the curriculum has necessarily been somewhat improvised and incomplete. Officials of the Ministry of Education have labored to overcome these deficiencies, and certain changes were in fact made in consequence of Lord's study which aim at combating the more dysfunctional of the prevailing superstitions.

It seems likely, however, that certain irrational dispositions are also involved here, dispositions to maintain the unscientific beliefs in spite of improvements in teaching methods and materials. One would predict this on the basis of general sociological understanding of the consequences of rapid social change. The disruption of the traditional belief systems brought about by the sudden dissemination of scientific beliefs inevitably creates insecurity, and a common reaction to such insecurity is to cling with increased tenacity to some of the old-fashioned beliefs which are closely identified with the traditional culture.²³

One area in which this defensive "revivalism" can be observed in Ethiopia is that of medicine. Many Ethiopians who have received modern secondary education maintain that Western medicine, while useful in many cases, represents only one possible approach to the problem of sickness and health.²⁴ Thus, fifty-seven per cent of the secondary students questioned asserted that traditional Ethiopian medicines are effective all or most of the time, although such therapies include the eating of rancid butter to cure malaria or drinking holy water to cure serious functional disorders. Dr. Lord herself has reported an episode which throws much light on the psychology of this reaction:

An Ethiopian colleague, a former teacher, warned me against drinking water in a certain provincial town on penalty of my catching malaria. He was challenged thus: "You are one of the better educated persons in Ethiopia; don't you know the cause of malaria?" He quickly, and eruditely, gave all the known scientific facts about malaria. Then he added, "You people from the United States (and the United Nations) think that this (the scientif-

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*883 men and outstanding commoners in the vicinity of the royal court. But with
 871 the importation of hundreds of foreign teachers, the establishment of an ex-
 178 tensive system of secondary schools and colleges, and the provision of eco-
 nomic support for thousands of post-elementary students, a real structural
 change came about. Although the school system remained completely subor-
 dinate to the throne, it introduced a number of processes that had a dynamic
 of their own.

*883 As we have seen, these new socialization processes have subjected the
 121 modern adolescents to many sorts of conflict and strain. They have been
 178 placed in conflict with their parents, and hence within themselves, on the
 basic issues of work and, particularly, marriage. They have been subjected
 to the simultaneous appeal of traditional and modern patterns in virtually
 all aspects of culture. They have been forced to make choices in numerous
 areas, while their traditional counterparts have customarily been prevented
 from making any kind of choice at all.

It might seem that such a situation would breed a troubled generation,
 distraught and disoriented, knowing what we do about the psychological
 hazards of rapid culture change. And indeed, among the modern adolescents
 of the fifties, one might find classical cases of anomie and identity diffusion,
 boys who confess, "Nothing seems worthwhile to me . . . I am confused,
 being brought up as I was on the traditional beliefs without questioning and
 then suddenly being forced to ask questions," or, "The problem of choos-
 ing the work I should go into is my only real problem right now, but because
 of it I find it hard to make decisions about anything. If this suffering is the
 price of freedom, I am not sure it is worth the price."

Such cases, however, were the exception, not the rule. Most of the students
 were working hard to get ahead in the world or enjoying their newly ac-
 quired freedom and camaraderie. Almost all our respondents had ready
 answers concerning the sort of work they want to go into, and what they
 (828) would do if they could have any wish granted. Comparing themselves with
 their elders, they presented a positive self-image. They regarded themselves
 as more "civilized," "well built," and "generous" than their parents' genera-
 tion, albeit somewhat lazier and less polite; and in comparison with Ethio-
 pians a decade older, saw themselves as "better educated," "more clever,"
 "more adventurous," and better able to "enjoy life." Nearly all of them
 (92 per cent) said that they felt either "enthusiastic" or "hopeful" about their
 (181) personal future. So one could characterize the Ethiopian post-elementary stu-
 dents of the fifties as relatively buoyant, clear-headed, self-confident, and
 enjoying their situation of culture contact and change far more than suffering
 it. How may this be explained?

(643) One great source of their strength was a sense of dependence on the
 Emperor. As founder of the Ethiopian school system, Haile Selassie has

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appeared to the students as the source of their new goods; of their learning, health, and well-being. Because of a feeling that "he supplies everything" and "he is my guardian," students of all grades have been among the most sincere and enthusiastic supporters of Haile Selassie. So their adoption of Western patterns has from the outset been legitimated by the highest traditional authority, and the harshness of the culture clash has been softened by the symbolization of both tradition and modernity in the Imperial Person. Here the traditional pattern of "functional deviance" re-asserts itself. The adolescent rebels against the traditional demands of his parents, but expends that deviant energy on behalf of legitimate symbols of the national society.

Related to this was a strong sense of national purposiveness. *Agarēnenna negusēn tammrē iredāihu* ("Having studied, I will serve my country and my king")—this was the motto of most Ethiopian students in the forties and fifties. The conspicuous needs of their country provided clear goals in terms of which students felt they were preparing themselves.

Still another motive force was the need for personal justification. The many students who in a sense deserted their home villages or families in order to spend years in school carried with them an ambition eventually to show the folks back home that they were right after all. This involved the conviction that going to school was the right, at times the righteous, thing: a blind faith that simply by continuing along the road of education they would make good in the world and return home some day as a sort of hero. Here, too, is an echo of the old deviant pattern: the renegade returning home, after many years, as a successful churchman or warlord.

The economic situation, finally, was encouraging for students. It seemed for many years that advanced training, including study abroad, would be available for whoever qualified, and that the demand for educated personnel was so great that the job opportunities for students would be endless.

By 1961, however, all these sources of adolescent morale—royal legitimation, national purpose, personal justification, and economic opportunity—had been to some extent undercut. Some of the changing circumstances have already been referred to. The effect of the rebellion of December, 1960, and its aftermath was to weaken the tie between Haile Selassie and the post-elementary students. With his moral authority somewhat undermined, the students could no longer use him to symbolize a conflict-free transition to modernity. Nor could they any longer count on him to "supply everything" indefinitely: in the summer of 1962 the Emperor announced the immediate suspension of room and board benefits for the students of the University College.

The students' outlook has further been rendered less sanguine by the confusion attending the political crisis of the sixties. They no longer feel the keen sense of national purpose, to serve "country and king." Their ideals in this regard were already weakening before the rebellion by virtue of increased

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- * 883 awareness of the political realities in the Ethiopian government. They had
 • 121 also begun to doubt the transcendent efficacy of the educational process itself
 178 after observing the behavior of those educated Ethiopians who went before
 (871) them and inevitably became their ideals. The violation of various traditional
 (883) and modern norms by the latter, and their evident demoralization, raised
 many questions in the minds of the students.
- * 883 Finally, the students were made more anxious by a general constricting of
 121 opportunity. Increased numbers in the school system meant a steady intensi-
 178 fication of the competition to gain and hold on to a place in secondary school
 871 and college, particularly since 1959. The rapid filling of jobs by the educated
 464 youth and steadily growing numbers of unemployed youth began to create
 anxieties about finding work in the future.
- * 883 From the viewpoint of the modern adolescents, then, a very supportive and
 121 stimulating environment in the fifties has changed to a somewhat threatening
 178 and confused environment in the sixties. It is in this decade that Ethiopia's
 leaders of the future, that tiny fraction of one per cent of the population who
 (873) reach secondary school, are coming to experience adolescence as a real
 [62] normative crisis. At a time when, in the highly modernized society of the
 United States, observers like Friedenberg charge that the adolescent condi-
 tion is becoming obsolete—that scope is no longer afforded the young person
 for exploration and discovery of an authentic self²⁸—in the transitional state
 of Ethiopia this condition is being thrust on the youth. The decisions they
 make now, the identities they forge, will largely determine the extent to
 which reason and creativity will have a place in Ethiopia's future.
- * 893 The effort of the Ethiopian government to provide a modern education for
 871 some of Ethiopia's adolescents illustrates a principle discussed in another
 121 context by Karl Mannheim, namely, the characterization of youth as a latent
 178 sociological resource which must be mobilized when any social system seeks
 to change itself. It is a resource analogous to the latent energy reserves which
 are available to biological organisms when they must make a fresh adjustment
 to their environment.²⁹ Thus far the effort to mobilize the resources of Ethio-
 pia's youth in behalf of modernization has proceeded chiefly through a pat-
 tern of increased *differentiation*: establishing a structure of secondary sociali-
 zation separate from that of the traditional structures and thereby transmitting
 new beliefs, skills, and values to the youth. As yet, relatively little has been
 done with respect to the problems of devising modes of *integration* commensurate
 with these new differentiated patterns. The analyses of this chapter
 suggest the presence of what might be called "integration gaps" on at least
 three levels. On the level of the individual personality, there is the problem of
 synthesizing the various aspects of traditional and modern culture which have
 been transmitted to Ethiopian adolescents through diverse sources. Inasmuch
 as the external supports which cushioned these conflicts in the fifties are no

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longer so secure, the adolescent individual has been thrown more on his own. 883*
He can only be helped to work through these conflicts by a transformed edu- 121 •
cational program, one which educates for self-education and seeks to en- 178
lighten students concerning the complex realities of economic development 891
and culture change. On the level of relating youth to a modernizing occupa-
tional system, there is the problem of guiding young people into and through
the relevant educational programs and helping them to find appropriate work
roles once trained. On the level of planning for the whole society there is the
additional problem of relating the number of individuals being trained in
various fields at any period to the priority requirements of a national develop-
ment program.

This last issue raises questions which for the most part lie outside the scope
of this book. Yet there is one point concerning the orientation of Ethiopian
students which is of immediate relevance: the disjunction between the aspira-
tion of modern-educated Ethiopians to live in Addis Ababa and work in a
government office, and the nation's needs for trained workers in more directly
productive fields and for those who will work in the provinces. For at the
same time that Ethiopia's youth are being trained in modern skills, they are
being exposed to modern pleasures; and these—the enjoyment of modern
amusements, the company of other educated people, and the excitement of
proximity to centers of national power and international commerce—are
concentrated in Addis Ababa. At the same time that they are being educated
with modern beliefs, they are being primed for a new kind of social mobility;
and this channel is concentrated in the governmental bureaucracy—the nest-
ing ground of Ethiopia's new elites. Conflict between these new interests and
the nation's deepest needs, endemic in all transitional societies, poses an inte-
grative challenge of the highest order.

5

THE OLD AND NEW ELITES

- 121 The disjunction between traditional and modernizing sectors that character-
177 izes the socialization of adolescents informs most aspects of contemporary
178 Ethiopian society. A modern institution of Western inspiration has nearly
everywhere been superimposed upon traditional forms, and as yet there has
been relatively little interaction between the two.
- [433] In the economy, subsistence production according to traditional techniques
prevails throughout all Amhara areas. Production for national and interna-
tional markets is funneled through separate channels: coffee lands and a
few tobacco farms in the southern provinces, specialized commerce in a
dozen or so provincial centers, and a small number of factories dependent
mainly on non-Ethiopian management and, frequently, capital. In the legal
[671] realm varied forms of customary law remain authoritative for much pro-
vincial litigation, while civil, criminal, and maritime codes based on French
and Swiss ideals have been enacted as the law of the nation. The govern-
[64] mental structure is similarly bifurcated, between local authorities who govern
in the traditional manner, albeit with reduced powers, and a ministerial
system and parliament based on European models. In the case of religious
[795] institutions there remains a wide gulf between the orientation of the Ortho-
[794] dox churches and that of such Western-inspired formations as the Theological
College and the Orthodox Students Association.
- 121 This sociological dualism comes to a head in the system of social stratifi-
56 cation.
178 148

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cation. Since the mechanism of stratification ranks all the members of a society according to the value placed on their qualities and performances by that society, the stratification system of a society is its most inclusive framework of social order. Here too, however, conflicting value orientations are embodied in more or less distinct status hierarchies, and it is no longer possible to find status evaluations which are shared throughout the society. It is in the composition and relations of the elites that the value conflicts in Ethiopia today are most explicit, and in their mutual adjustments that the movement toward new forms of integration is most likely to be manifest. [571]

The traditional infrastructure of Abyssinian society was itself relatively stratified. Highest in status were the landowning peasants, the older and wealthier of whom merged imperceptibly into the lower stratum of the nobility. Next in order were the peasants of various situations who did not own land: sons waiting to inherit land from their parents, tenants paying rents in kind to some landlord, and agricultural laborers attached as retainers on the estates of wealthy peasants, nobles, or churches. Below them were the statuses of Abyssinians who led a more mobile sort of existence, such as weavers, minstrels, common soldiers, and beggars. [463]

The trading class was broadly divided into two ranks, that of the merchant (*naggādē*) whose caravans brought goods from afar, and that of the small-scale peddler (*shaqūṭch*). The wealthier Abyssinian merchant was accorded very high status, comparable at times to that of the nobility. If an Arab, Armenian, or Muslim Abyssinian, however, his status would be tainted by that disesteem felt for all outside the ethnic pale. The peddlers as a class were in a low status, comparable to that of the weavers and minstrels. Below these were metalsmiths, potters, and tanners, who were sometimes low caste Abyssinian artisans, sometimes Falasha or Gurage tribesmen. Lowest in status were the slaves, captured in wars or raiding expeditions from the Negroid tribes in the west (Shanqalla) and north (Baria and Kunama), and from the Kaffa and other Cushitic groups in the south. Freed for a generation now, such people still work as household servants and retainers, or as laborers in the towns. [565, 567, 551, 463]

Such were the classes which performed the drudgery. They produced sufficient surplus to sustain a fairly extensive, if not opulent, leisure class, which ministered to the more general political and cultural needs of the society. The feudal nobility and the clergy represented the paramount values of warfare and religion and shared responsibility for the maintenance of legal order. Together with the emperor, to whom they were normally subordinate, they commanded the resources and respect of the Abyssinian people and set standards for their behavior. [181]

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643 century, who instituted a number of monthly holidays and prescribed new
17 liturgical texts; to Menelik, who introduced vaccination and the eucalyptus
[461] tree in the twentieth century. For more than a century now kings and em-
perors have attempted to combat the traditional Abyssinian repugnance for
manual labor by themselves engaging in arduous physical work on numerous
occasions.¹¹ Haile Selassie has followed a pattern with abundant precedents in
introducing the many changes which have characterized his reign.¹²

As object of Abyssinia's highest esteem, symbol of its most cherished values,
possessor of supreme wealth and power, and author of new norms, the em-
peror of Ethiopia thus qualifies as an elite in the more technical, sociological
sense of the word as well as in its original sense of "being chosen."¹³ Indeed,
if more extreme interpretations of the emperor's significance are to be
credited, he might even be viewed as the fountainhead of high status for all
other elites. Thus Bruce, in a famous passage, declares:

The Kings of Abyssinia are above all laws. They are supreme in all causes,
ecclesiastical and civil; the land and persons of all their subjects are equally
their property and every inhabitant of the kingdom is born their slave; *if he
bears a higher rank it is by the king's gift; for his nearest relations are ac-
counted nothing better.* [Italics mine.]¹⁴

Such an interpretation, however, is more ideological than analytic. Through-
out Ethiopian history one can discern definite limits to royal authority, and
bases of elite status other than imperial favor.

121 It is true, as Margery Perham ably sets forth, that a primitive state of tech-
643 nology and severe geographical obstacles prevented the realization of imperial
17 power to the degree that the royal ideology would have permitted.¹⁵ Yet this
failure of the monarchy "to build up any kind of administrative framework
through which to exercise the absolute powers with which, by tradition and
consent, it was endowed" was not simply a matter of wanting techniques. It
also reflected the importance of ultimate values other than that of anointed
royalty in Abyssinian culture.

121 The primary sociological limit to imperial authority was the commitment
643 of the Abyssinian people to the tradition of their church. Religious conversion
17 was one change which, at least in the period of Amhara hegemony, could no
771 longer be tolerated. Za Dengel (1603-4) and Susneyos (1607-32) were
brought down because of their forthright conversion to Catholicism, and the
overthrow of Lijj Iyāsu in 1917 was legitimated on the alleged grounds that
he had become a practicing Muslim. The decline in power of Tēwodros II
(1855-68) was due in no small measure to the fact that his cavalier policy to-
ward the clergy resulted in his being branded an enemy of the church.

121 A second limit on imperial authority lay in the perennial tendency of cer-
643 tain regional families to become endowed with an aura of legitimacy in their
17

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own right. Indeed, the record of rebellions by nobility as well as clergy against the emperors of Ethiopia bespeaks a persisting dualism in the Abyssinian's disposition toward the monarchy itself. In principle, the emperor is revered. Widely held is the sentiment expressed in the *Kebra Nagast*: "It is not a good thing for any of those who are under the dominion of a king to revile him, for retribution belongeth to God."¹⁶ But unquestioning deference is by no means necessarily coupled with unswerving loyalty. The Abyssinian pattern differs from the Japanese, in which total loyalty to the divine monarch calls for suicide in the wake of any disgrace one might have brought upon him. The norms of fealty to the emperor have not been so deeply internalized in Ethiopia, where the pardon and reinstatement of rebels has been a common occurrence. Among Abyssinians a veneer of genuine deference has often concealed an inner consciousness of disaffection, enabling the individual to act out rebellious wishes when the opportunity or need arises. Indeed, this ambivalence has been one of the traditional impulses behind the culture pattern of wax and gold. [121] 643 [17]

The Old Nobility

The Abyssinians themselves acknowledge the existence of, in addition to the emperor, two groups of persons with pre-eminent status. These are called, both in Ge'ez and Amharic, the *maḳuännent*, or "nobility," and the *kähenät*, or "clergy." While believing the presence of a king to be a precondition of civil order, they also regard the presence of these other elites as necessary for their good life. This attitude is expressed in the Amharic saying: "Fertility of the land [is] through the *maḳuännent*; the splendor of the church [is] through the *kähenät*."¹⁷ 565 571 554

The term *maḳuännent* may be used to refer to all secular dignitaries between the emperor and the well-to-do landowning peasantry. In strict contemporary usage, however, the *maḳuännent* should be distinguished from two other classes of personages, whom we may call the "royal nobility" and the "local nobility" or "gentry." The former consists of the immediate royal family (*negusäwi bētasab*) and more distant royal relatives (*masäfent*). Because of their kinship with the Solomonic line these have at times been referred to as "chiefs of Israel."¹⁸ Although it was customary for each new king to exile all male relatives who were potential candidates for the Crown to a high mountain fortress, more distant relatives might hold provincial governorates, and women of the royal family sometimes played an important role in court politics and provincial administration. Members of the royal nobility have normally been distinguished by special titles: *äbēto* (now vulgarized as *äto*, "Mister"), *le'ul*, and *lijj* for men; and *emebēs*, *le'elt*, and *wayzaro* (now vulgarized in the sense of "Mrs.") for women. 565 644 554

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799 the contemporary church hierarchy, the *dabtarā* stressing their special intel-
175 lectual qualification for high positions, the monks their greater piety.

The Traditional Balance

- 121 Whatever the internal fragmentation of the church—which was com-
799 pounded by regionally based doctrinal controversies—it may for the moment
571 be considered as a unified estate vis-à-vis the secular powers. This permits us
to raise the question of the integration of politico-military and religious elites
in traditional Abyssinian society, a question that may be discussed in terms
of two relationships: that between the values represented by the two elites,
and that between the interests of their respective institutions.

799 The social teachings of the Ethiopian Church were couched in terms of
793 practical justice, not universal love. Thus the pacifistic strain in Christianity
182 barely made itself felt. The priests, to be sure, were forbidden to shed blood,
animal or human; but this is more in the nature of a necessity for the main-
tenance of ritual purity than a symbol of moral principle. They went along
willingly to the battlefield in ceremonial capacity. In fact, comments d'Ab-
badie, most of them would reject the interdiction of their taking part in
military expeditions as a denial of their rights.⁵⁰

799 Far from opposing warfare, Ethiopian Christianity served rather as an
721 inspiration and justification for wars; since much of the fighting was directed
571 against Muslim, Judaic, or pagan peoples, the warfare took on something of
182 a crusading tone. As for internecine war, it was commonly justified in terms
[681] of *lex talionis*, a religiously sanctioned punishment for the sins of the enemy.
In this respect, then, the two elites gave impressive support to each other.
The warlords were serving the church by fighting the heathen. The fate of
their military expeditions, on the other hand, was assisted by the prayers of
the accompanying clergy. This reciprocal dependence was symbolized by the
[727] custom of taking some *tābot* along with the army to the battlefield, and by
the custom of "greeting" the church as the first thing a warrior does when
he returns home.

799 The values of warfare and religion were further harmonized by the sym-
721 bolism of the emperor, Lion of Judah. The emperor combined in his person
182 the figures of indomitable warlord and devout—and divinely guided—
643 Christian. This combination was an integral part of the self-image projected
by many emperors, as reflected, for example, in the identification with
Constantine the Great manifested by Zar'a Yā'qob and Eskender (1478-94) in
their choice of throne name, and by Tēwodros II in his coronation speech.

565 With regard to civil policy, moreover, the nobility and clergy were in basic
792 accord. Both groups felt a special responsibility for adjudicating disputes.
793 Both felt that their superior status entitled them to receive substantial
571 amounts of rent and revenues from lands granted them by the king, and to
182

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furniture, etc.—are equally burdensome investments if the returnee does not possess them. Furthermore, the traditional large wedding is still expected in most cases. In the city this involves an enormous expense—as much as Eth\$2,000–\$4,000—which often puts the groom in debt for several years.*

There are many returnees for whom these factors are excuses more than insuperable obstacles, or who frankly prefer the extended bachelordom made possible by the greater freedom of the modernizing sector to an uncertain match. If, as frequently is the case, they would marry only an educated wife, they may be discouraged by the shortage of educated Ethiopian women; or beset by too much pride, if coming from a humble background, to ask for the hand of an educated girl who is likely to come from an upper-class family. They may be victims of the cycle of antagonism that has developed between educated men and women in Ethiopia, the former attacking the latter for demanding too much in the way of material things and being only superficially modernized—"half-baked"—and the latter indicting the former for preferring foreign girls and unjustly neglecting Ethiopian women. [571 585 511 582 581 578]

But the root of the problem is often deeper (leaving aside, for this discussion, characterological factors). It is entwined with a basic insecurity about the whole idea of marriage in the transitional atmosphere of contemporary Ethiopia. Perhaps nowhere in the minds of the returnees do traditional and modern norms stand in such delicate counterpoise as with regard to the question of the sort of wife one should marry and the proper type of relation to have with her. Should he prefer the traditional woman, modestly dressed and inconspicuous, or the Western ideal of a sexually attractive female? Should he have a wife who stays at home all the time, or one whom he takes along to social gatherings? Should he have a wife with whom to share interests and discuss problems, or one to order about and keep in her place? The returnees have normally been attracted by the Western marriage pattern while abroad, but it is so out of place in the Ethiopian context that many are troubled by the prospect on return. The foreign-educated man feels he should have an educated wife, but he also feels threatened by a woman who is independent, especially if she is holding a job. Such ambivalence adds an additional dimension of vulnerability to the returnee's position. [581 578 571 571]

In sum: the conditions of life receptive to a modernizing intellectual stratum have not yet been established in Ethiopia. The personal frustrations of the returnees are an inevitable consequence of their being the bearers of modern culture in a traditional oligarchical order—especially one that has [121 571 571 578]

* A new custom has developed in response to this problem. It has become the practice in some offices for sheets of paper to be circulated prior to a wedding in the ministry or agency where the groom is employed. Co-workers write the amount they wish to be deducted from their salaries in their behalf. Most recently, modest weddings have started to become respectable. [178]

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- 121 been affected by modernizing agents for but a relatively brief period and in
 591 a relatively diluted fashion. The beliefs and values which the returnees
 197 acquired while abroad concern national development, technical competence,
 198 and individuality, while the norms of the social structure in which they must
 live are based on the values of loyalty to monarch, ascribed status, and
 authoritarian relations.

121 Of many possible types of response to such a situation of strain, four are
 591 common among the Ethiopian intelligentsia. These we may designate by the
 197 terms Opportunism, Withdrawal, Reformism, and Rebellion. With reference
 198 to the three variables of commitment to modern goals and norms, acceptance
 156 of existing authorities, and the distinction between "activity" and "passivity,"
 these patterns may be represented schematically as in Table 14.⁵⁰

TABLE 14

MODES OF ADAPTATION OF ETHIOPIAN
RETURNEES

	Commit- ment to Modern Values	Accept- ance of Existing Authorities	"Activity"
Opportunism.....	-	+	+
Withdrawal.....	+	-	-
Reformism.....	+	+	+
Rebellion.....	+	-	+

[554] Opportunism is the mode of adaptation in which the returnee's commit-
 ment to modern goals and norms is eclipsed by his passion for status, power,
 and income. He differs from the traditional aspirant for high position in
 Abyssinia in that two of his status qualifications are novel—residence abroad,
 and a university degree—and above all in that the pursuit of his personal
 goals entails a *renunciation* of nationalistic ideals and universalistic standards
 which were nurtured while abroad. For some opportunists this is no real
 problem: their study abroad was all along essentially a façade to be used in
 advancing their careers. But for the others the process of becoming an oppor-
 tunist is a gradual one and attended by chronic self-recriminations, as the
 returnee finds himself compulsively agreeing with his superiors and flattering
 them on every occasion, and performing actions primarily for the sake of ad-
 vancement rather than for the sake of doing a job well.

It is impossible to go on pursuing progressive principles indiscriminately. I
 sometimes see my friends doing things now which we used to condemn

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when we were students abroad together. I wonder at times if I am losing sight of my principles altogether.

Withdrawal is the solution of those who have retained their principles at the expense of being effectual in action. The routes of escape are varied. One way is transferring attention to problems outside the country—to international relations, problems of pan-Africanism, or the gossip about London, Paris, and New York.

To me the independence of all African nations is more important than the progress of Ethiopia.

Some spend their energies in convivial relations with resident Westerners (diplomatic and technical assistance personnel, foreign businessmen) or in the traditional rounds of family visiting. Quite a few returnees lose themselves in card-playing or chess whenever they can, and a number have taken to heavy drinking. Often the returnee who withdraws shows no "symptoms" other than a general constriction of his life into narrow work routines and creature functions. At the same time he may be experiencing a fairly acute sense of estrangement.

Our generation is not really living. We are not "engaged." The simple weaver—most of the people in this country—are "engaged." We are not; we live from day to day. When I leave work I go to the Ras Hotel or somewhere else. I don't want to go home, there is nothing there for me. I have nothing to work for. I have no family, nor any interest in saving money.

The third type of response, Reformism, involves the attempt both to maintain principles and to be effective in action under the existing political order. This alternative places great demands on the personality system and might well be designated as the pattern of "moral heroism."

What we lack today is proper organization. In default of organization, we are forced to rely on morality.

The reformist returnee serves his country according to universalistic standards even though these norms are scarcely institutionalized; even though, in other words, he is likely to be criticized and even punished for maintaining standards in the face of demands by superiors and relatives to do otherwise, or for solving problems in a rational manner on his own initiative. Yet if he is officially disregarded or censured, his efforts do not go unnoticed by the patriotic modernizing elements of the population who, in a covert, informal system of communication, tend to establish severe judgments on the "bad guys" and the "good guys," and to idolize the latter as potential leaders.

In the case of Rebellion, finally, the attempt is made to be active in the pursuit of modern goals but in a spirit of basic alienation from the existing

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- 121 authorities. Except for a very few eccentric individuals who have seemed
571 oblivious to the dangers of speaking out their criticism of the status quo in
177 public, this has in the nature of current circumstances necessarily involved
178 clandestine activity. Returnees have been involved in small conspiratorial
156 groups since the mid-fifties. The December, 1960, coup d'état has been the
(669) most ambitious rebellious project to be acted out so far. Similarly motivated
(668) activities have included the duplication and distribution of subversive literature, and the formation of small groups as groundwork for an eventual political party.

Our data do not permit reliable estimates of the frequency of these different modes of adaptation among the returnees. It is important to note, however, that individuals often change from one mode to another in the course of their experience after return and that many follow more than one pattern at the same time. It is unlikely that the total number of returnees oriented primarily as rebels has ever exceeded two per cent. Most of them move in and out of phases of Reformism, Withdrawal, and Opportunism, depending to a large extent on the accidents of their appointments. A more concrete picture of their experience may be suggested by the following case study, that of a Western-educated Ethiopian who went from a phase of Withdrawal to one of Reformism tinged with Opportunism.

The Adjustment of "Haile": Case Study of a Returnee

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October, 1958. Haile has recently returned from four years of study in a Western country. He speaks very critically about the state of things in Ethiopia. He is particularly upset by the prevailing inefficiency, the lack of industriousness, and the interminable procrastination (*ishi naga*).
- January, 1959. Haile seems deeply depressed. The ministry in which he has been placed affords him no opportunity to work effectively and the job he has bears no relation to what he was trained for. He has withdrawn more into himself, but to all outward appearances plays perfectly well, with great self-assurance, the role of the Amhara bureaucrat.
- July, 1959. Now Haile is working in a different ministry, in a job somewhat more closely related to his training. He appears to feel productive and useful now, and his criticism is constructive. For example, he frequently compares the situation in the United States and Ethiopia, to show how the same sort of problem can be solved more readily in the U.S. because of its greater facilities. Though Ethiopia's comparative handicaps frustrate him, he talks of plans for the development of Ethiopia with some enthusiasm. . . . Haile complains of an

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overload of work, noting that he must not only do his own work but also rectify the mistakes made by others which are brought to him. In his whole branch of the ministry, he finds only two really effective workers besides himself, and they, too, are returnees. . . . He feels fortunate in having encountered no major opposition to the things he is doing in his work and points happily to the fact that his assistant minister has supported him throughout.

October, 1959.

Haile now is saying that things are fine in Addis Ababa and stresses the great improvement that has been made during the past five years. He claims that he is getting along fine in his ministry, because his job is straight "busy work." Even so, he is not a pure "ritualist"; he has already negotiated a number of reforms in the operations of his office. His general outlook seems bright—partly, no doubt, because he is "arriving" (what with printed name-cards and a smoothly functioning job) but also because he has a pretty fiancée whom he plans to marry next year. . . . At another point, however, he shows great exasperation over the considerable conflict among factions within the ministry. He decries the nepotism practiced by the heads of these factions. He says that he tries to stay independent of their intrigues.

June, 1960.

Recently Haile was given additional responsibilities in his ministry, and he expects a raise in salary soon. Although this new work is still further removed from the subjects he studied while abroad than was his previous job, he no longer complains about not being hired to do what he had been trained for or about not being used. He remains unhappy about his minister, who brings in his own men from the outside rather than promote men from the ranks—"or else I would have been a director general by now." On the other hand, he mentions with evident pleasure the fact that the Emperor sent over a gift at the time of his wedding. . . . Haile's wife is a simple, traditional sort of Ethiopian girl. He seems happy with her and with their home—an old, poorly built structure that is falling apart, but which she has taken pains to enliven with a few decorations, and has equipped with a radio. He looks forward to the prospect of building a house on their own land sometime in the future. Meanwhile, a baby is on the way. . . . The circle has come full swing. Haile talks proudly about his work, his family, and his country.

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the Amharic phrase *ya-kantu weddäsē zaman*—"the era of futile flattery."

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For, whatever other aspects of modern culture they have identified with, the locals and returnees are seized with the promise of its first principle: dynamism.⁶² Should they join forces, among themselves and with each other, they might create the effective intelligentsia which is indispensable for realizing this dynamism in action. They would play complementary, and equally necessary, parts; the locals contributing their greater drive and closeness to traditional society, the returnees their broader perspective and skepticism toward simplistic answers and total reforms.

There are numerous obstacles to such a progressive development. Some of them represent the persistence among the intellectuals of a number of traditional pan-Abyssinian characteristics which inhibit both the exercise of creative leadership and the capacity for solidary action. The traditional context of these characteristics will be discussed in the chapters which follow. The most conspicuous obstacle, however, has been the manner in which the Ethiopian government has sought to integrate the intellectuals in the social system. This is the subject to which we now turn.

771 *The Role of the Government*

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In the hierarchy of values which sustained the traditional Abyssinian social order, that of the transcendental religious orientation represented by the Orthodox Church may be said to have held the paramount position. This is the sense in which, as has so often been remarked, religion has been Abyssinia's only truly unifying factor throughout the centuries. Religious charisma transferred from foreign sanctuaries—the mythical Ark of the Covenant brought from Jerusalem and the archbishop periodically imported from Egypt—provided the ultimate source of legitimacy in the society, upholding the authority of a sacred Christian monarch, church-defending warlords, and a numerous and functionally differentiated clergy. It so penetrated the social system that the basic unit of Abyssinian civil life was in fact a religious one, the parish.

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In retrospect it would seem that the most profound aspect of Haile Selassie's accomplishment has been to dislodge the transcendental religious value from its highest place and to replace it with the system-integrative value of loyalty to the emperor.⁶³ His mission has been above all a secularizing one. To accomplish it he has had greatly to increase his political and economic resources; but insofar as his regime has been accepted, and not based exclusively on sheer power—which to some extent is certainly the case—the paramount value in Ethiopia under Haile Selassie has become loyalty to the emperor as a symbol of the whole society. The autonomous significance of the church has been reduced; its extra-Ethiopian source of charisma has been cut off, and its func-

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But this gentle, paternal control has been backstopped by more rigorous sanctions. Censorship controls assure that anything that is published is highly flattering of the government. Intelligence networks keep intellectuals from speaking their minds and developing them through open exchange with others. Associations have in general not been permitted to form, or else have been saturated with government informers. Coupled with these repressive measures has been the policy of making appointments dependent on the extent to which one curries favor with the Emperor directly, or one of the new nobles who is high in favor at a given time. The intellectuals, no less than the new nobility, have been kept in line by *shum-shir* and *divide et impera*. "We have been kept from acting," said one remorseful returnee, "by fear and the sweetness of office." 643 571 656 [557]

In the political order sustained by the rule of Haile Selassie, the paramountcy of loyalty to the imperial government as a value has precluded the ascendancy of values of national development and technical competence, values it is the peculiar burden of the intelligentsia to bear and assert. In this situation a vicious cycle of mutual mistrust has developed between the government and the intellectuals. Although the articulation of standards and the expression of criticism are important functions of intellectuals, the Emperor has tended to regard all expressions of criticism which reflect on the government, which is his personal government, as expressions of filial ingratitude at best, and at worst as signs of subversion. The intellectuals, in turn, have accepted this definition of the situation and have tended to assume—after some disheartening experiences in the course of the fifties—that it was not plausible for them to express criticism in a framework of basic loyalty to the regime. Distrust fed distrust, and antagonism mounted. The abortive coup d'état of December, 1960, was but the most outspoken and violent expression of this. 571 578 643 [181] [669]

This growth of antagonism to the government has seeped down among the students. The feeling has become increasingly widespread among students at home and abroad that genuine service to the nation and the performance of technical functions are incompatible with a loyal and secure existence under the present regime. Thus, one student in a Western country said in 1961: "I am afraid to return to Ethiopia. I fear that I shall either lose all my principles, as so many of my friends seem to have done, or that I shall end up without a job or in prison."

ETHIOPIA'S DILEMMA

Haile Selassie has often proclaimed his devotion to a program of modernization. His personal achievements in this direction have been substantial: the establishment of much modern bureaucratic machinery, the institution of a parliament and electoral procedures, a mild degree of industrialization, and, above all, the provision of a modern secular education for thousands of young people. 121 643 178 [647] [646] [666] [871]

- 121 people. He has been the procreator of much of what demand for moderniza-
 643 tion now exists in the country, although the Italian colonial administration
 178 must also be credited for a certain amount of this demand. By the fifties
 however, the growth of the demand of modernization had become self-sustain-
 ing, if only in a relatively small part of the population. At that point Haile
 (181) Selassie was unwilling, or at least unable, to take the next step, to raise na-
 tional development higher in the societal value hierarchy than loyalty to the
 Crown. Thus, a traditional oligarchy has been maintained, in which the
 (571) development of a self-respecting modern intelligentsia has been effectively
 restrained and its decisive ascendance as a new elite has been prevented.

121 The paramount sociological problem in Ethiopia in the coming decades
 concerns whether or not this pattern will be broken. There is no guarantee
 that it will be. It is highly thinkable that the opportunists among the intel-
 lectuals will be absorbed into the new nobility and that a new oligarchy will
 entrench itself and maintain its exclusive position by increased repression.⁶⁰
 The number of young people being given secondary and college education
 will continue to be limited to a diminutive percentage, and the deeply rooted
 sentiments of the mass of the population for a regime of traditional oligarchy
 will not be offended. Economic development will proceed at a snail's pace,
 and what additional wealth is produced will flow into the pockets of a small
 minority. One possible outcome of such an eventuality would be that the
 modernizing infrastructure of the society would grow increasingly restless,
 culminating in a revolution which installed a modernizing oligarchy.

Alternatively, modernizing forces already unleashed in the country may
 gather momentum and sustain a gradual breakthrough of the new order. If
 one were to credit the reports of many who have spoken with the Emperor at
 first hand, this would be his desire. But far more than imperial approval of a
 distant ideal is required for it to become reality. Two conditions, above all,
 would be essential. One is that the systematic, if unwitting, demoralization
 of the intellectuals would have to be ended. Some sphere would have to be
 created in which universalistic standards have full sway, in which a modern-
 izing intelligentsia can maintain and develop standards and transmit them to
 younger elements. The most obvious way to do this would be through a uni-
 versity which, by guaranteed financial support, independence from political
 pressures, and determined operation at a high standard, could provide the
 Ethiopian government and people with the technical and executive intelligent-
 sia needed for effective modernization, and could provide an environment in
 which a corps of "custodians of the public good," loyal to the regime but
 free to express criticism, might be developed. The program for such a uni-
 versity was carefully drawn up by the planners of the Haile Selassie I Univer-
 sity. It remains to be seen whether the opposition which muffled that program
 shortly after its inception, in the spring of 1962, was motivated primarily by

personal antagonism toward some of the foreign academic officials intrusted with its implementation, or whether it primarily reflected natural political pressures against the establishment of an autonomous and vigorous university. Whatever the reason, the failure of the university to develop in the promising manner in which it had been conceived means that for some time to come only the continued sending of large numbers of Ethiopian students abroad will supply the intelligentsia required if modernization is to continue, and that their demoralization on return can only be reduced by instituting an effective civil service system and permitting them some degree of freedom in speech, press, and association. 121

The other condition is that the intellectuals themselves will have to break out of their posture of defeatism and negativism. They will have to abandon the delusive image implied by the intellectual who replied, when asked why he was sitting around in his office and doing no work: "I'm waiting until the government changes." The burden for the breakthrough rests upon them: upon their capacity to push forward in the light of developmental needs and technical requirements, maintaining a sense of affinity both with the government and with the traditional masses. Until the values of the intelligentsia are effectively institutionalized, they will get nowhere unless their ranks produce fewer "escapees" and more "moral heroes." The chances for the success of this elite would seem to rest in part on its mastery of those qualities which Edward Shils has described in analyzing the prerequisites for successful leadership in the new states—"on its capacity for self-restraint and its effectiveness in legitimating itself through modernizing achievement, through a due respect for the claims of traditional beliefs and through its recruitment of a stratum of intellectuals of intermediate level who can reinterpret traditional beliefs, adapt them to modern needs and translate them into a modern idiom."⁶⁷

Are Ethiopian intellectuals capable of this? In the succeeding chapters we shall consider factors which work against their so doing. Yet there is no doubt that many educated Ethiopians have quietly been demonstrating such qualities for years now. Already numerous intellectuals, working as medical officers, teachers, agricultural extension workers, engineers, lawyers, journalists, and bureaucrats have shown great capacity for translating traditional Abyssinian reserve into self-restrained progressivism, and through diligent application to the task at hand and a sympathetic orientation to their tradition-minded countrymen have been laying the foundations for the great transformation. Whatever the pace and pattern of Ethiopia's political development, such work constitutes the indispensable raw material of her modernization.

6

ORALITY AND THE SEARCH FOR LEADERSHIP

- 121 In the previous chapter we observed that modern-educated Ethiopians, particularly those who were educated abroad, acquired knowledge, skills, patriotic motivation, and social position with which they might conceivably have made substantial reforms and innovations in Ethiopia's institutions. And yet, in their own eyes as in the eyes of some high government officials and foreign observers, they have done relatively little. Their behavior has been marked by a conspicuous absence of creative leadership and solidary action.

571 Among many of the modern-educated this alleged sin of omission has, in turn, generated an underlying current of reproach against the government and at times against themselves. We have described some features of Ethiopia's domestic political situation which have limited the freedom of modern-educated Ethiopians to carry out progressive activities. A number of them have proceeded from awareness of those limitations to placing all blame on the government for Ethiopia's slow pace of development. Others, however, have turned some if not all of that reproach inward. "It is up to us," they say, "and we have done nothing. Why have we failed? Why have we no moral backbone, no character?"

- 121 This chapter and the next are concerned with the basis of this latter reproach, as well as with the more general task of enriching our understanding of traditional Amhara culture. We shall proceed on the assumption that insofar as modern-educated Ethiopians have failed to take decisive steps in developing their country they have been held back by other constraints and

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limitations in addition to those imposed by the government. In the present chapter we shall deal chiefly with factors which are inhibitive of creative leadership, and in the chapter which follows chiefly with factors which affect the capacity for solidary action.

One of the most honest and perceptive of my foreign-educated informants had this to say about the absence of creative leadership among the returnees:

Our maladjustment may be more our fault than that of the government. We have been led to expect everything from the government, and have become dependent to such a point that we can scarcely think or act for ourselves.

This is a remarkable and convincing piece of self-analysis. It falls short only insofar as it implies that the posture of dependence on governmental authority is something peculiar to the modern-educated. It is true that there have been certain conditions such as the "welfare" character of the secondary schools, which are specific to the experience of the modern-educated and which have accentuated a tendency to overdependence. But this tendency is endemic in traditional Amhara-Tigre culture, and those modern Abyssinians who exhibit it are following an inclination deeply rooted in the needs they have acquired and the culture they have internalized in their childhood.

There are various ways in which one might conceptualize this problem. It is not unrelated to what other authors have referred to variously as lack of achievement motivation or lack of innovational personality. The approach of this chapter will stress certain psychoanalytic concepts and insights. In so doing, it will not attempt to delineate an Amhara "basic personality," a task well beyond the scope of the present study.¹ Rather, we shall be concerned here solely with certain kinds of motivational orientation which are widely shared among the Amhara and which frequently inform their social behavior and their cultural symbolism.

Adopting the terminology developed by Erik Erikson,² we may rephrase the point about Amhara overdependence by saying that in Amhara action and fantasy the social modality of "getting" figures very prominently. The superior is oriented chiefly to getting food, services, and deference from his inferior;³ the inferior is oriented chiefly to getting favors from his superior. And most interaction among the Amhara is cast in the form of superior-inferior personal dyadic relations. The prominence of this modality reflects a fixation of libido on what Erikson calls a mode of approach to the environment that is "incorporative," and that originates in connection with the infant's experience with a particular part of his body, the oral zone. The central thesis of this chapter is that Amhara behavior and symbolism exhibit a very high degree of attachment of libido, not only to the organ mode of incorporation, but even more to the oral zone.

THE PHENOMENA OF AMHARA ORALITY

155 Shortly after an Amhara child is born some butter is placed in his mouth. This
826 is done in the belief that it will keep his voice from becoming harsh. From
[856] that moment on, the mouth never ceases to be an organ of extraordinary
[192] importance in his life. Its cultural importance is reflected in the attention
given to it in the Amharic vocabulary: Baeteman's *Dictionnaire Amarigna-
Français* lists some sixty idioms built with the Amharic word for mouth, *af*,
more than are listed for any other words in the language except "eye,"
[539] "heart," and "earth."⁴ The organ is publicly celebrated in such proverbs as:
"Cleverness of mouth, to the master; cleverness of hand, to the slave."

155 The oral zone is of course of universal significance. Some items of oral
826 imagery probably appear in most languages, and manifestations of oral libido
[171] appear in many forms familiar to Westerners: the French love for gourmand-
ism, the German passion for beer-drinking and singing, the American addic-
tion to cigarettes, chewing gum, and "life-savers." Many of the less familiar
phenomena to be related below in describing Amhara orality, moreover, are
found in most of the cultures of Africa and the Middle East. But such
phenomena often appear inconspicuously alongside other culturally patterned
impulses and sublimations stemming from other phases of psychosexual de-
velopment. What may distinguish the Amhara—and doubtless some other
cultures—is the extent to which the oral zone is an object of attention and a
source of behavioral modes and expressive symbolism. The Amhara, it ap-
pears, have a preoccupation with orality.

- 121 This preoccupation is manifest in three different kinds of phenomena.
- 155 There are, first of all, aspects of Amhara culture which express a strong posi-
tive attachment to the infantile experience of sucking, in pure and in nu-
merous sublimated forms. These we shall designate as the phenomena of
oral erotism. Second, there are the aspects of Amhara culture which express a
[152] strong positive attachment to the oral zone as a center for various aggressive
activities—the modes which Erikson calls "incorporation by biting," "oral
retention," and "oral intrusion." These we shall collectively designate as the
phenomena of *oral sadism*. Finally, there are phenomena which express a con-
flict about the gratification of many of these oral desires; and these we shall
refer to as the phenomena of *oral ambivalence*.

155 *Oral Erotism*

853 Feeding at the breast is a prominent and beloved experience in Amhara
life. The Amhara infant is suckled whenever he wishes, at the slightest show
of desire. Since he is rarely separated from his mother it is easy for him to
satisfy himself at any time of day or night. Popular beliefs about breast-feed-

155 gratifications are not enjoyed wholly without conflict. In actuality, traits which reflect anxiety about the prospect of oral gratification are no less conspicuous in Amhara culture than the phenomena we have just been discussing.

155 Negative attitudes regarding oral gratification appear, first of all, in the
262 scope and variety of the restrictions placed on eating. From both their Judaic and their Christian traditions the Abyssinians have taken over nearly every restriction on eating available. The chief exception to this is the Judaic injunction against eating blood, which Abyssinian custom permits. But they have retained intact the Semitic ban on unclean animals—those which lack a split hoof, upper teeth, or do not chew the cud. Their dread of pork is so strong that to some extent they feel closer to Muslims, who also avoid pork, than to Western Christians.

155 They have likewise retained and elaborated on the norms concerning fast-
785 ing found in early Christianity. With respect to the number and harshness of the fasts it prescribes, Amhara-Tigre custom is probably the strictest in the world. In the rigor of its fasting laws the Ethiopian Church surpasses its sister religions of Eastern Orthodoxy—the Coptic, Syrian, Armenian, and Indian Orthodox Churches. On fasting days no food or drink is to be tasted before early afternoon. Thereafter, no sort of meat, fowl, milk, or eggs may be eaten, which reduces the Amhara's post meridiem diet on fasting days to grains and pulse.

Such fasting days occur on every Wednesday and Friday of the year, except those which come during the eight weeks after Easter. There are, in addition, many special fasts in the course of the year. Some of these, like the month-long fast before Pentecost and the two months prior to Christmas, are observed only by clergy and elders. Others must be observed by everyone, though children are led into them gradually. These universal fasts include the eight weeks before Easter, plus a three-day fast during the week before Lent; two days before Christmas; and sixteen days preceding the festival of the Assumption of Mary in August. Total abstinence is prescribed for a period of forty-eight hours before Easter. All together, the ordinary Amhara is supposed to fast 165 days each year; for the devout person the total approaches 250 days.

155 The taboo on the use of tobacco presents another area in which oral grati-
276 fication is suppressed. Two myths are told to explain this taboo. One is that
773 the tobacco plant originally grew out of the intestines of the heretic Arius.
784 The other is that on the day of the Crucifixion all plants except tobacco withered and died. In any case, smoking is regarded as a grave sin among traditional Amhara, and one who has been suspected of using tobacco is not permitted to kiss the Cross.

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784 One could argue that these taboos and fasting customs are simply cultural
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phenomena, traits inherited from earlier traditions and retained through inertia, and that no psychological processes need be invoked in describing them. But this argument fails to explain why, in view of the harmful physical and political consequences of their excessive fasting, the Amhara should have developed in the direction of increasing rather than alleviating their fasting burden. For Abyssinia's commitment to fasting was well known by her enemies, and used to her disadvantage: Ahmad Grāñ took advantage of the country's weakness during Lent to launch his attacks at that time year after year, and the Galla hordes who succeeded him did likewise. The argument also fails to explain why the taboos on pork and tobacco, and the fasting prescriptions, should have been pushed to the forefront of Amhara Christian consciousness. For observance of these mores is considered the very crux of Christianity by traditional Amhara. Amhara often refer to fasting as the most important part of their religion. If a person fails to fast, his relatives are technically absolved from the duty of providing memorial feasts for him when he dies; let his soul wander in darkness! Fasting more than anything else protects them from the devil and enhances the likelihood of their entering paradise.

Apart from their adherence to these cultural norms, moreover, the Amhara also manifest anxiety regarding oral gratification at the purely psychological level. There is, on the one hand, a constant undertone of concern among Amhara about getting enough to eat, even under favorable agricultural conditions. On the other hand, there is a good deal of concern about the consequences of eating too much. There is much worry among the Amhara about the dangers of excessive eating at the conclusion of periods of fasting. There is also the fear that if one indulges in eating and drinking he may become uncontrollably hostile, a fear expressed in the previously mentioned notion of *teḡabaññā*. These and other forms of anxiety about oral gratification are expressed in a number of folk tales, in which eating, drinking, singing, talking, or simply opening one's mouth result in such misfortunes as sickness, loss of property, and death.²⁰ A similar theme appears in the epic *Glory of Kings*: the Queen of Sheba, in satisfying her thirst by drinking from a goblet which King Solomon had placed in her bedroom, thereby forfeited her right to immunity from his amorous desires and was obliged to yield to his embrace.

Ambivalence regarding oral aggressiveness, finally, may be discerned in the Amhara's anxiety about being eaten, an anxiety which should probably be interpreted as an externalization of unacceptable oral-sadistic impulses. Traditional Amhara have a morbid fear of being "eaten" by those with the evil eye, *budā* and *ṣayb*, men who are believed to destroy their victim by invisibly sucking his blood. It is largely because of this fear that children are kept away from strangers. Similar projections appear in connection with other well-known figures in Amhara culture. Another fearful object is the *ṣirāq*, a giant

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155 cannibal with eyes in the back of his head. (The specter of the *chirāq* is some-
152 times evoked in order to frighten children into behaving properly.) Still an-
[176] other figure is the *salābi*, a person who is imagined capable of spiriting away
[189] a man's harvested grain by means of magic incantations.

• 121 Without delving into questions on the cultural origins and social functions
155 of oral ambivalence among the Amhara, one can understand how it comes
into being in the individual by looking at what happens during childhood in
Amhara society. It is true that, if one abides by the hypothesis on this
subject supported by Whiting and Child's cross-cultural study, the phe-
nomenon remains puzzling. Their theory attributes a high degree of anxiety
about oral gratification to a low level of indulgence of oral gratification in
early childhood and a high level of frustration during weaning. This partic-
[853] ular hypothesis is not consistent with the data on the Amhara. As we noted
earlier in this chapter, oral gratification is indulged among infants to a very
high degree by Amhara mothers. There is considerable variation in Amhara
121 practice with regard to weaning, moreover. At times the advent of a new
155 baby or a mother's sickness may require abrupt weaning, in which case a
862 bitter substance is put on the mother's nipple to discourage the infant. In
many cases, on the other hand, weaning occurs so gently and spontaneously
that little or no frustration is involved for the infant. The relative frequency
of these two procedures is a question for which adequate data have not
been assembled, but the norm seems to be a gradual departure from the
breast, after the child has been happily adjusted to eating other food for more
than a year.

121 Even if the Amhara child is not frustrated by too little indulgence of suck-
155 ing and too severe weaning, he is nonetheless deprived in two other respects
146 as he emerges from infancy. One is nutritional. Medical studies of Abyssinian
children suggest a dietary deficiency beginning in the second half of the first
year, and persisting throughout early childhood.²¹ It is possible that this
relative decline in biological well-being contributes to a sense of deprivation
toward the end of the breast-feeding period.

121 The emotional situation of the child after weaning presents a more visible
155 area of frustration. Amhara childhood is marked by a fairly sharp discon-
858 tinuity. This may be illustrated by the fact that many Amhara boys are
nurslings at the age of three and shepherds at five. The narcissism which has
flowered during the nursing stage is dealt a series of blows as the young
child becomes subject to the responsibilities, punishments, and suppressed
status which are the lot of Amhara children. According to contemporary psy-
choanalytic theory, this sort of change in emotional support has far more
significance for the development of behavioral tendencies than the mechanics
of the weaning process; and what psychoanalysts have posited as a possible

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consequence of substantial loss of accustomed mother love at the time of weaning—a mild but chronic state of mourning which gives a depressive undertone to the rest of life—is certainly one of the more evident characteristics of most Amhara.²² At the same time the Amhara child is made anxious about his actual oral gratifications. He no longer eats whenever he wants to, but only after he has waited for the adults to finish their meal. He is no longer entitled to the choicest food, mother's milk, but to poorer food and leftovers. And he is made increasingly aware of the adult anxieties about eating connected with the fasting requirements, and with the food shortages of the rainy season. [264]

Applying the Whiting-Child hypotheses in the light of these observations one may characterize the development of an ambivalent preoccupation with the oral zone by Amhara as follows: an initially very high level of oral satisfaction enjoyed during the nursing period makes oral gratification a particularly attractive source of pleasure as well as a desired refuge for the psyche under the pressure of later deprivations; while the emotional and nutritional deprivations which the Amhara child experiences toward the end of the nursing period and thereafter undermine the sense of security acquired during his indulged infancy and make him anxious about the fount of that security, oral gratification.* [121 155]

Whatever the precise ontogenetic basis of this phenomenon may prove to be, the Amhara's ambivalent preoccupation with orality is projected at the cultural level in the form of two contrasting human ideals. The secular masculine ideal in Amhara culture is a hero of oral gratification and prowess. He is a man who eats much and drinks much, and who excels in litigation, in declaiming the martial chants, and in composing veiled insults. The religious ideal, on the other hand, is a hero of oral renunciation. The most devout Amhara are considered those who keep all of the fasts, even the esoteric ones; or even, as monks and ascetics, live on a fasting diet the year round—in the extreme case, feed on leaves as hermits. The association of religious virtuosity with oral renunciation reaches its logical climax in legends about Gabra Manfas Qeddus ("Servant of the Holy Spirit"), the most hallowed Amhara saint. In contrast with the normal Amhara boy who nurses for close to three years, Gabra Manfas Qeddus is said to have been at his mother's breast for only three months, when a bird swept down one day and carried him away. [173]

* While this formulation may leave more questions unanswered than it solves—a purely behaviorist formula inevitably neglects the dynamics of defensive operations and the significance of ambivalence—it carries us as far as our data permit and may provide a useful point of departure for further discussion and investigation of Amhara psychology.

ORALITY AND MODERNIZATION

- 121 The preoccupation with orality which appears in their traditional orientations
155 has not disappeared among those Abyssinians who have acquired a modern
571 education. In some respects, that experience has tended to intensify it. A state
of prolonged dependence was institutionalized in the government school
system. The hiring of most educated Ethiopians by the government has
meant that most of them live in a position of waiting to receive their salary—
or *injarā*, as they themselves put it—from the central authority. Thus the
image of a bountiful father-figure has become the more firmly established.

(643) While in his own person the Emperor has projected an image of vigorous
leadership, he has at the same time taken pains to promote this old pattern
of oral dependence, by sending gifts of food to students and of champagne
to educated officials when they marry; by continuing to provide politically
relevant feasts at the palace; and, like the traditional Amhara father-feeder,
by frequently reminding his subjects that everything they have they owe to
him. This pattern is replicated to some extent in the relations between mem-
bers of the new nobility and their younger relatives and retainers.

Part of the self-reproach of some of the modern-educated Ethiopians is
directed against this passive, receptive aspect of their motivational orienta-
tion. Their criticism says in effect: instead of drafting proposals to reform
our departments, teaching or writing in order to educate our countrymen,
or seeking to understand better the complexities of Ethiopia's current situa-
tion, we are far more likely to be found sitting about drinking coffee in our
offices, sipping beer at some hotel, playing chess, savoring felicitous phrases,
and going to parties where eating and drinking are invariably the main
order of business.

Insofar as they are moved to take a more active approach to their situation,
moreover, their effectiveness is blocked by a tendency to fall into the tradi-
(578) tional oral aggressive patterns of behavior. Their manner of criticizing the
government, or certain officials, is frequently one of wholesale insulting.

When confronted by a difficult problem, whenever they do not fall back to
(521) a posture of dependence on superiors, they incline toward argumentation,
chīqechīq, backbiting, and mutual incrimination. Experts in debate, they are
unaccustomed to the arts of creative discussion.

121 It is not my intention to suggest that the phenomena examined in this
155 chapter are in total conflict with the Ethiopians' search for leadership. Many
aspects of Amhara orality are not in the least inconsistent with the demands
of a modernizing culture. Many aspects of Amhara orality would appear to
be of enduring value—the excellence in debate and the appreciation of lit-
erary subtlety, the preparation of fine feasts and the enjoyment of the table.
And it is not necessary for a very large number of Amhara to change their

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orientations in this regard for creative leadership to be effective. What is suggested is: that by tending to relate to their environment either in a passive-receptive mode of getting, in an active-sadistic mode akin to infantile petulance, or in a state of guilt and anxiety concerning elementary gratifications—that minority of Amhara and other Ethiopians who are in a position to introduce constructive change follow a type of adjustment which is inadequate to the challenge of their present situation. Adaptive as these modes may have been in the past, they are archaic in the present. 121 155

The search for leadership in Ethiopia today is partly a search for new ego ideals. It is a search for persons and images embodying a more productive and procreative type of orientation, capable of inspiring a creative minority of Ethiopians to build on, not abandon orality, and to move beyond.*

* That this search goes on at a time when the epigones of modernity, living in an age of high mass consumption, appear to be relaxing into a more passive, incorporative mode—the mode of television-watching and supermarket shopping—is but one of the many manifestations of what is perhaps the central irony of the human condition at this point in history.

291 / Notes to Pages 43-71

43. E. Combes and M. Tamisier, *Voyage en Abyssinie* (4 vols.; Paris, 1843), III, 342, call Gondar "une ville de plaisirs." Eduard Rüppell, *Reise in Abessinien* (2 vols.; Frankfurt am Main, 1838-40), II, 190, speaks of the Gondarës "grenzenlosen Liederlichkeit."
44. Trimmingham, *Islam in Ethiopia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 104.
45. Rüppell, *op. cit.*, II, 132.
46. Isenberg and Krapf, *op. cit.*, p. 287.
47. "Menelik's conquests," of course, were won for the most part by trusted generals, who were men from all parts of Ethiopia. 000
48. The figure is from a local census made by the Gondar Public Health College around 1958.
49. The Ethiopian Election Board listed 88,000 families and a registration of 35,000 voters in Manz in 1957. The figures are probably exaggerated.
50. The regional association will be discussed further in chapter vii.
51. "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States," *Old Societies and New States*, ed. C. Geertz (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), pp. 105-57. 113
52. "Ansprache an die Mitglieder des Vereins B'nai B'rith," *Gesammelten Werke*, XVII, 51-53.
53. *Ibid.*, and *Collected Papers*, V, 174.

CHAPTER 3: *The World of the Amhara Peasants*

1. Ernest Luther, *Ethiopia Today* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1958).
2. The general methodological problem involved here is discussed in Hugo Engelmann, "The Activity Bias of Ethnography and the History of Society," *Anthropological Quarterly*, XXXIII (July, 1960), 158-63.
3. The TAT cards designed for use in Ethiopia were originally prepared by Dr. Edith Lord, US/AID, in connection with her own research there. The data on which the present study draws were obtained by administering twenty-five cards to a sample of twenty young Amhara in Manz—seventeen males and three females—ranging in age from sixteen to twenty-five years. 121 • 125 565
4. Cf. Samuel Alamayahu, "The Game of Gännä," *University College of Addis Ababa Ethnological Society Bulletin*, No. 9 (1959), pp. 9-28. 113
5. Cf. Akalou Wolde Michael, "Buhe," *UCAA Ethnological Society Bulletin*, No. 7 (1957), pp. 57-64.
6. Simon Messing, "Group Therapy and Social Status in the Zar Cult of Ethiopia," *American Anthropologist*, LX (December, 1958), 1120-26. More extensive discussion of the zär may be found in Messing, "The Highland-Plateau Amhara of Ethiopia" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1957), and Michel Leiris, *La possession et ses aspects théâtraux chez les Éthiopiens de Gondar* (Paris: Plon, 1958).
7. This section draws on material previously published in D. Levine, "On the

PREFACE

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This dissertation describes the medical beliefs and practices of an Amhara population of northwestern Ethiopia. The field research upon which it is based was conducted from January to December, 1966, in the highland area of Begemder province that extends from Gorgora, on the northern shore of Lake Tana, to Debark, overlooking the Takassie valley (see Map 3). This region is occupied by four ethnic groups, the Amhara, Abyssinian Muslims, Falasha (Abyssinian Jews), and Agaw (former pagans). All are racially indistinguishable from one another, and speak a common language, Amharic. North of the Takassie River live the Tigre, a people closely related to the Amhara and, like the latter, Coptic Christians.

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The Amhara, who are the most numerous of Begemder's peoples, also inhabit much of the highland plateau extending to the south, into Gojam and Shoa provinces, and to the east, into Wollo province. Most Amhara are rural folk who practice a mixed agricultural economy, growing grains and pulses; raising sheep, goats, and cattle. The Amhara countryside is divided into parishes. A parish is composed of several hamlets whose residents live on dispersed homesteads, and share important social and economic ties through their parish's church. In addition to these rural folk, Amhara constitute a majority among the townspeople of highland Begemder.

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000 townspeople of highland Begemder.

632 Field research was concentrated in the vicinity of
114 Gondar, the largest of the province's towns, and imperial
capital during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

[874] Today, it is the provincial capital and an important ec-
[346] clesiastical center, housing several famous churches and
* [756] renowned ecclesiastical academies. The town is also the
home of many of the province's most famous healers. Ex-
tended research was also conducted in the Woggera region
north of Gondar, in the rural hamlets discussed in Chap-
121 ter Three. The division of research efforts between
town and countryside reflects the important urban and
rural aspects of Amhara medical practices with regard to
the distribution of practitioners.

Through observation and inquiry, this field research
sought, first, to elicit a description of the social and
natural environments in which Amhara perceive pathogenic,
prophylactic, diagnostic, and therapeutic forces to oper-
ate. A second concern was to examine how Amhara select
elements from these environments, and arrange them into
etiologies with which to explain particular disease epi-
sodes. On the one hand, this meant collecting abstract,
conscious etiological models used by Amhara; on the other
hand, it meant recognizing etiologies that are construc-
ted pragmatically and piecemeal, in the course of pro-
phylactic and therapeutic failures and successes. Fi-

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- 121 nally, data were gathered relating to the modes of acquiring, exercising, validating, and conserving powers of prophylaxis, diagnosis, and therapy. Here, as in the other areas of data gathering, a necessary distinction was made between the perceptions of practitioners and those of their clients.

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539 While the secular medical traditions of Ethiopia are exclusively oral; powerful cleric healers known as debteras have traditionally employed diagnostic, prophylactic, and therapeutic texts written in Ge'ez, the language of the Church, and in the vernacular. Numerous debtera texts have been collected in the libraries of Europe and the United States, and valuable translations, most notably by Marcel Griaule, Deborah Lifchitz, and Stefan Strelcyn, have been published. These published translations, together with translations made in the field with the assistance of clerics, have been utilized in the writing of those sections of Chapter Four dealing with the debtera's medical texts.

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171 Although the focus of this dissertation is limited to the region in which field research was conducted, it should not be overlooked that the Amhara share important cultural affinities with peoples, now largely Islamic, occupying lands extending from the eastern Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf.

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The highlands of Begemder, Tigre, and Eritrea form

- *753 causes a secondary ailment by lacerating the victim's heart, equally often no specific pathogenic mechanism is specified for the prodrome.

TAXONOMY AND ETIOLOGY

- *753 A "disease name", to use Frake's definition, is a
*192 minimal, meaningful answer to the question, "What is the
196 name of the illness?", in Amharic, "Baṣiyta simmu min
• (121) yibbaalaal?". If none of the linguistic components of a description of an illness can by itself describe that ailment (baṣiyta), then the entire description is a disease name, and labels a single diagnostic category. Not all episodes of illness can be diagnosed by a single disease name, of course, since distinguishable ailments may co-occur, or one may be a prodrome of another (Frake 1961:126).

Disease names thus differ from designations of kinds of symptoms, although the names of certain symptoms are also used to denote specific ailments. For example, "bird" refers to "chills", but "yibird baṣiyta" (lit., "the chill disease") refers specifically to "malaria". The same is generally true regarding the use of the names of pathogenic agents. For example, the literal meaning of "yibariya baṣiyta" is the "ganal's disease" ("bariya", meaning slave, is often used as a euphemism for "ganal");